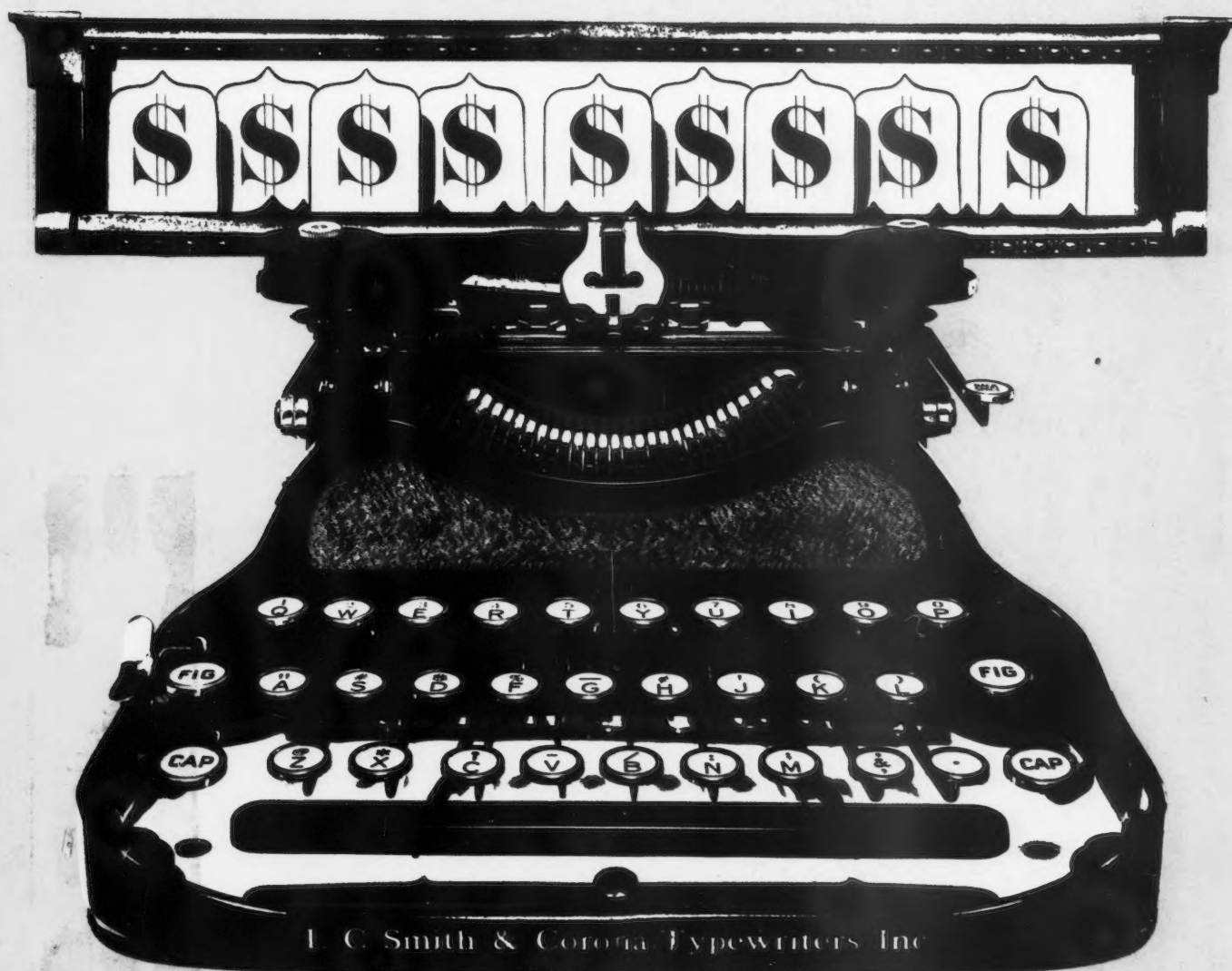


COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1976
NATIONAL MEDIA MONITOR/PRESS • RADIO • TV



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Boosters in the newsroom

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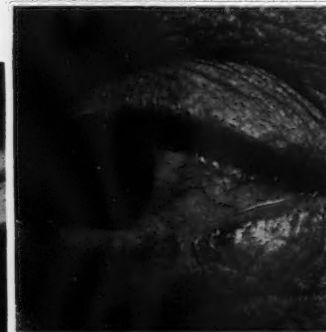
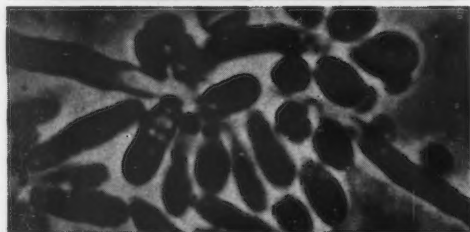
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"To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define — or redefine — standards of honest responsible service . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

—Excerpt from the Review's founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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COMMENT

Too much hair in local TV news

Charles Kuralt, known for his "On the Road" reports for *The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite*, recently issued another kind of report — a summary of his impressions of local TV anchormen gleaned from years of watching local news, "morning after morning" and "evening after evening," in a series of forgettable hotels and motels. Kuralt described his findings in a pungent speech given at the annual conference of the Radio Television News Directors Association, held in Dallas last fall.



"My overwhelming impression of all those hours in all those years," Kuralt said, "is of hair. Anchormen's hair. . . . Hair carefully styled and sprayed, hair neatly parted, hair abundant, and every hair in place." He went on to say that he couldn't "remember much that came out from beneath all that hair." Kuralt, who described himself as "a fat man becoming bald," offered a possible

explanation: "The reason may be there wasn't much substance there."

The lack of substance, the ubiquity of anchormen "who wouldn't know a news story if it jumped up and mussed [their] coiffure," infuriated Kuralt. "The plain truth," as he saw it, "is that in a society which depends for its life on an informed citizenry, and in which most citizens receive most of their information from television, millions are getting that life-giving information from a man — or a woman — whose colleagues wouldn't trust him to accurately report on his afternoon round of golf."

The point is well taken, we believe. As for the radio-television news directors, we suspect they got a sharper earful than they bargained for when they invited Kuralt, so genial in his "On the Road" persona, to address them in Dallas — and that they and their station managers will continue to put too much emphasis on hair, too little on solid reporting.

Gag order on a gag order

In late November, Supreme Court Justice Harry M. Blackmun upheld portions of a gag order issued by a Nebraska judge — but the citizens of Nebraska were not allowed to learn the details of what he had done, or why. The ruling was made prior to the trial of a man accused of murdering six of his neighbors. The state judge barred the press from reporting evidence in advance of the trial, and he also barred reporting of those parts of his gag order that mentioned specific evidence. Local prosecutors had obtained a confession in the case; the state judge, and Blackmun, were trying to keep mention of the confession and other details out of Nebraska press reports, to avoid biasing future jurors.

However sympathetic we may be to the rights of defendants, we are not persuaded that anyone knows, or can know, whether publication will injure the rights of the Nebraska defendant. As a general counter to the familiar argument that publicity hurt the trial of Dr. Sam Shepherd, we recall the acquittals, in the last few years, of John Mitchell and Maurice Stans, of Black Panthers in New York, and of radicals elsewhere — despite a great deal of unfavorable pre-trial publicity. Such cases clearly show that the effect of publicity on jurors is not simple, irremediable, or predictable. Speculation about whether news may bias a jury is airy conjecture, by no means a foundation solid enough to justify censorship. (It is also difficult to justify the social importance of bits of dramatic crime news, but, under the First Amendment, information need not be important to be free — it should be free, rather, so that its importance can be judged.) Perhaps extraordinary circumstances can be imagined that justify rare exceptions, but, as a general rule, the worthy goal of preventing jury bias is not achieved by, and does not justify, official restraints on the flow of news to the public.

If it can be shown that reporting pre-trial details in an extraordinary case will inflame the community without serving any useful purpose, then it is the journalists, not the judges, who should decide to defer publication, for if they are wrong, their independent decisions will be reversed more quickly and with less danger to the public.

This case raises a further point: we do not believe that concern for fair trials should permit judges to impose even temporary secrecy on the contents of their own orders. When a Supreme Court justice limits reporting on his decisions, he has begun to put himself beyond public scrutiny, a privilege judges should not be allowed.

An electronic op-ed page

It is frequently claimed that TV news is by nature shallow, an electronic front page. A new show on public television, *The Robert MacNeil Report*, contests this claim by offering a kind of electronic op-ed page. Produced by New York City's WNET, the half-hour show, broadcast on week nights, devotes each program to a single subject. During the third week of November, for example, MacNeil broadcast an interview with UN ambassador Daniel Moynihan; a discussion of the safety of intrauterine devices; and programs on energy legislation, Ronald Reagan's presidential candidacy, and Arab pressure on U.S. businessmen to restrict trade with Israel.

The show's chief virtue is the expertise it brings to breaking news stories. The *MacNeil Report* staff of ten correspondents and reporters in New York and Washington can choose a subject and do a program on that subject within twenty-four hours. Thus television now has what it should have had long ago: a nightly program of news analysis. The program is intelligently scheduled, just after the networks' news broadcasts, and so far its ratings have been encouraging. At the least, *The Robert MacNeil Report* is an excellent example of the way public television can supplement commercial programming.

G-man journalists: disturbing questions

The reports late last year that FBI men were given press credentials by NBC News were disturbing. The FBI men had posed as newsmen, according to internal bureau documents presented before the Senate Select Committee on Intelli-

gence, "through cooperation with the management of NBC News," in order to interview members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic convention. It is not difficult to imagine the harmful suspicion that would arise if news sources could not be sure whether they are speaking to a reporter or to a government agent.

NBC's response to the allegations did not settle the matter. In an interview given to Les Brown, a TV reporter for *The New York Times*, NBC's chairman Julian Goodman said only that NBC had been unable to substantiate the charge. "We have investigated as thoroughly as we know how," Goodman is quoted as saying, "and we still don't know what it's all about or why NBC has been implicated in this way."

The question remains: what inspired the FBI memo?

Presidential primaries: is anybody listening?

We thought that pollster Burns Roper made a good case against presidential primaries in his recent *CJR* article (November/December). We didn't expect that a campaign to abolish primaries would spring up as soon as his article was printed, but we hoped his analysis of how poorly state primaries sample national preferences would inspire at least some skepticism. How wrong we were. As this is written, well before the February New Hampshire primary, the front page of *The Christian Science Monitor* states: "A loss in Florida and New Hampshire, analysts say, would make it far more difficult for the President to move strongly into key primaries that follow in the Midwest." And *Newsweek* explains the scenarios: it seems the Reagan goal is "upward

mobility" in primary vote tallies, while the Ford strategy seems to be "early lumps" and recovery "no later than the April 27 primary in Pennsylvania."

In general, we doubt that the standard question of political reportage, namely, "Who's ahead?", is the most important question about presidential politics. And, as Roper explained, primaries give unreliable answers even to this question. Primaries have become classic examples of events that are important mainly because everybody watches them, rather than events that everybody watches because they are important. We wish skepticism about their news value were more widely shared.

A blush at the Review

A few weeks ago, editors of the *Review* nodded in mild agreement as they read in the *National Observer* a long letter from the *Observer's* own editor, Henry Gemmill. "I've discovered," he wrote, "that my own publication, the *Observer*, has employed what I regard as slick trickery in dealing with some of its own subscribers."

Gemmill then explained how he had signed a letter sent to a cross section of his readers asking that they fill out a questionnaire. It was the usual kind of questionnaire: age of subscriber, approximate income, civic activities, occupation, and the number of others who read each copy received.

Mr. Gemmill's ire resulted from his discovery that the questionnaires, labeled "confidential," had gone out bearing an invisible serial number which could be read only under an ultraviolet light. He was not mollified when assured that the number was used only to facilitate a follow-up questionnaire going to those who did not answer in the

first case. Nor did he feel much better when his research disclosed that others were doing it — *Time*, *Fortune*, *Saturday Review*, *New York*, *Newsweek*, etc. He, in effect, apologized for “clandestine coding” and “surreptitious invasion of privacy.”

The *Review*'s editors were startled to discover that the *Observer* survey had been conducted by the respected firm of Erdos and Morgan. That firm, they recalled, had carried out a readership survey for the *Columbia Journalism Review*. A quick search of files turned up the letter of agreement with Erdos and Morgan. Deep in the text were the words “We will send . . . a one-page two-side questionnaire individually invisibly keyed, for possible statistical use only . . .” The letter had been routinely approved in September 1974, apparently without this item being singled out for questioning by the officer then in charge of such matters.

On the basis of what is now known, the *Review* is satisfied that Erdos and Morgan has not abused its promise of confidentiality and genuinely intended the keys simply for follow-ups on those who did not respond the first time. (Moreover, it is recognized that there can be no guaranteed anonymity in all of the personal-interview surveys that are conducted for similar purposes.)

Nevertheless, the *Review* agrees that this particular technique contains the potential for abuse. It will not be approved for use in any future survey that the *Review* may commission. We appreciate and applaud Mr. Gemmill's forthright article.

No row on King's Row

It's a rare FCC ruling that pleases everybody, but the recent decision that television stations showing Ronald Reagan re-runs are liable for equal-time demands by competing candidates — producing, in effect, a ban on his films for the duration of the campaign — is a ruling with which few would quarrel. Certainly not the actor himself; the political benefits from *Code of the Secret Service* are, at best, dubious. Certainly not his rivals; what prudent White House aspirant would dare suggest a vote against

The Gipper? And surely not his partisans, faced with fallout from a TV listing of their man in *Bombs Over China*. Recalling some of the films, one wonders if it isn't Reagan who should receive equal time.

Darts and laurels

Dart: to the *Atlanta Constitution* for its play on Old South racial humor. A caption under a photo on its October 2 sports page: HAIR STRAIGHTENER: ALI CATCHES FRAZIER WITH STIFF RIGHT.

Dart: to *The New York Times* for expanding the presidential health story to include trivia about the First Lady. An October 22 *Times* headline: FORD IS RECOVERING FROM COLD, BUT WIFE HAS NASAL CONGESTION.

Laurel: to the *Pacific Sun* for the imaginative use of limited resources. The San Francisco Bay area weekly invited readers to become volunteer investigative reporters. A team of six such volunteers produced a revealing critical profile of an overly ambitious area community college.

Dart: to UPI for an inaccuracy that took some doing. In an October 23 dispatch UPI identified the former Democratic governor of Kansas, Robert Docking, not only as the current Republican governor, but quoted him as a spokesman for the Republican Governors' Conference.

Laurel: to the *Minneapolis Star*, for its candor in describing, as part of a series on the media in the Minneapolis area, a serious blunder in its own newsroom that led to stopping the presses for a correction.

Dart: to Arlington, Virginia's *Rosslyn Review* and its editor, John Jacobs, for one of the most shamelessly promotional issues of a newspaper we've ever come across. Editor Jacobs and a photographer were guests of an Arizona land developer, and when they returned they gave over most of an issue to articles and thirty-one photographs of their trip, many of them featuring the editor and his hosts. Even the paper's logo was thrown out to make way for the headline, THE ROSSLYN REVIEW CAPTURES THE WEST.

Dart: to New York City's WCBS

Radio, for a mawkish and mindless rhyming editorial on New York's money troubles that compared the city's “body politic” to a prodigal son-junkie hooked on money and trying to “stand firm in our resolve to get well — that we may receive the ministration of our father figure in Washington.”

Laurel: belatedly, to the Block Drug Company for its act of principle in the face of public pressure. The company refused to withdraw sponsorship of CBS's controversial documentary “The Guns of Autumn,” thus reaffirming the important principle that sponsors should not dictate program content.

The soft pedal

In mid-November a story appeared in *The New York Times* which bore the kind of headline that has by now become familiar to us all: GULF SAID TO HAVE GIVEN PERSONAL FUNDS TO SCOTT; SENATOR ISSUES A DENIAL.

The story, written by E. W. Kenworthy, and bearing the dateline, Washington, November 14, was placed on page 35, the first page of the *Time*'s business and finance section. It began:

Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Senate Republican leader, was said to have received \$5,000 each spring and fall for several years from the Gulf Oil Corporation, according to a sworn statement by a Pittsburgh lawyer in a firm representing the oil company. The statement was made by Thomas W. Wright of the Pittsburgh firm of Reed, Smith, Shaw & McClay in a deposition taken for a suit against Claude C. Wild Jr., former Washington representative for Gulf Oil. The suit is in connection with the company's alleged \$10.3 million slush fund used for payments to United States politicians and foreign government officials.

It was not this opening paragraph, however, that riveted my attention to the *Times*. Rather, it was the second, a far shorter paragraph, in which Kenworthy said that “Mr. Wright also named many other politicians of both parties, including Gerald R. Ford, who, he said, had received payments from the corporation through Mr. Wild from 1960 through 1973.” Later in his piece, Kenworthy wrote that “corporate contributions to

political candidates and office holders are illegal." And still later came the following paragraph: "The White House press secretary, Ron Nessen, said tonight: 'The President never knowingly took a contribution from Gulf or any other corporation. All contributions in 1972 and before were reviewed by the Senate and House Committees during the confirmation hearings when Ford was nominated for Vice Presidency. The committees concluded there was no problem with any of the contributions or the source of the contributions.' "

As it happens, I have no problem with the information that was presented in Kenworthy's piece, for the simple reason that it will turn out to be either true or untrue. In the meantime, I am perfectly willing to take Nessen's word for the fact that the Senate and House committees found no problem with any contributions made to one Gerald R. Ford. (Just as, quite obviously, they found no problem with the fact that Gerald R. Ford, at President Nixon's instigation, led an abortive attempt to impeach Justice William O. Douglas.) Rather, my problem has to do with why this particular story ran on page 35 — in the least-read section of the *Saturday Times*. Page one of the *Times* of that day — November 15 — bears such headlines as HOUSE UNIT SEEKS CONTEMPT ORDER AGAINST KISSINGER; LISBON CAPITULATES TO LABOR DEMANDS; and FROMME JURY HEARS FORD TAPE; TESTIMONY FIRST BY A PRESIDENT. What, however, was conceivably more important about these or any of the stories that appeared on page one than the story that was buried on page 35? Why was it decided not to place Wright's disclosure about Gerald R. Ford in the headline above the story, which named Senator Scott in bold type? And why, in a lengthy front-page article about Gulf's contributions to politicians, which appeared on November 25, was there no mention whatsoever of Gulf's alleged payments to Ford? Is it possible that the editors of the *Times* were reluctant to take their readers back to those uncomfortable days of, say, two years ago, when, daily it seemed, the disclosures came out of its pages like torpedoes homing in on

the Ship of State? If so, I would like to give a word of reassurance to my colleagues over at the *Times*. Don't worry about rocking a boat that has already foundered. We drift today upon a sea of suspicion. In a life raft that may have sprung a leak.

PAUL BRODEUR

Paul Brodeur is a writer on the staff of The New Yorker.

A better way to figure CPI increases

A note on the Consumer Price Index and the method of translating one month's increase into an annual rate of increase.

The concept is a good one. Few people know what a .2 percent increase in one month means to them. Almost all have some feeling for what prices rising at a rate of 2.4 percent a year means. But the method of arriving at the annual rate needs closer inspection.

Each month the Bureau of Labor Statistics issues a release giving the index and the increase, seasonally adjusted, from the previous month's index. The increase is given in terms of a single, lonely decimal place. In August the magic number was .2 percent. A great many reporters simply multiplied that .2 percent for August by twelve months and got an annual rate of 2.4 percent. Darts to them, they were wrong. A few used the formula for compound annual rate, figuring each month as an increase on the previous month, and got 2.43 percent and rounded it off to 2.4 percent. A frieze of darts and laurels to them: they were on the right track but armed with the wrong information.

The problem is that single decimal place. The August .2 percent could stand for anything from .15 percent to .24 percent. That means that, compounded, you can build up quite an error. The lower-limit figure gives you 1.8 percent a year, the upper yields 2.9 percent a year. In fact the .2 percent stood for .1675 percent, and yielded an annual compound rate of 2.0 percent.

The exact and accurate compound

annual rate can be gotten in at least two ways. A simple phone call to the BLS can get you the monthly increase worked out to their standard four decimal places. Or, it can easily be worked out from the figures. The BLS each year issues a table of seasonal adjustments for each month. For 1975 it is Table #3 of the April Consumer Price Index, released on May 21. With that in hand, a reporter can divide the figure for the new month by the adjustment, which yields the seasonally adjusted figure; do the same for the previous month; and obtain the seasonally adjusted increase to as many decimal places as he or she wishes, and then compound it on a hand calculator in a few seconds' work.

It may seem trivial to go through many decimal places, but consider the July CPI increase of 1.2 percent. That represents anything from 1.15 percent to 1.249 percent. Simple multiplication by twelve months gives 14.4 percent a year. Compounding the lower figure gives 14.7 percent; compounding the upper gives 16 percent. The lower values turn out to be the correct ones in this case, but it could as easily have been the upper values.

The BLS seeks to de-emphasize one-month differences and purposely avoids publishing seasonally adjusted indexes and calculating annual rates each month. It believes that three-month figures are more representative, and does publish annual rates based on the preceding quarter.

But I believe that if reporters are going to publish the monthly figures — and we ought to — we should make them comprehensible by working out accurate yearly rates. I understand what it means to say my car is going thirty-five miles an hour. I do not understand what it means to say that my car went .58 miles in the past minute — or that the price index rose .15 percent. Miles per hour and percent a year are what people expect from us and we should take the time and trouble to work them out properly.

GEORGE E. HERMAN

George Herman is a Washington correspondent for CBS News and the moderator of Face the Nation.

PENTHOUSE PETS OF THE YEAR?



JUNE 1975. "Kissinger's Secret Intelligence Empire" by Tad Szulc. How our roving Secretary of State controls a \$25 billion network of 200,000 spies.

OCTOBER 1974. "Is Gerald Ford Just an Honest Version of Richard Nixon?" by Peter Rand. How Ford perpetuates Nixon's policies while managing to keep a boy scout image.

AUGUST 1975. Colby's CIA: "Murder by Proxy" by Tad Szulc. How the U.S. plans and commits subversion and assassination abroad.

JULY 1975. PENTHOUSE interviews Cesar Chavez, leader of the migrant farm workers' struggle against the Teamsters, the growers and the monster corporations who dominate our food supply.

MAY 1975. PENTHOUSE interviews E. Howard Hunt, the CIA superspy who engineered both the Bay of Pigs and Watergate.

OCTOBER 1975. PENTHOUSE interviews Hortensia de Allende. She explains why she holds the CIA, big business and the American government responsible for the death of her husband and the enslavement of the Chilean people.

APRIL 1975. "Lee Harvey Oswald Was Innocent" by George O'Toole. The first scientific evidence that the alleged assassin of President Kennedy was telling the truth when he said, "I didn't shoot anybody."

JULY 1974. "Richard Nixon and Organized Crime" by Jeff Gerth. Was Nixon's involvement with the underworld the longest coverup of all?

SEPTEMBER 1975. PENTHOUSE interviews former middleweight contender Rubin "Hurricane" Carter. "I come to you in the only manner left open to me... Now the only chance I have... (of proving he was framed and getting out of prison)... is in appealing directly to you, the people..."

Lately, PENTHOUSE has been uncovering a lot more than pretty women. Last year hard hitting PENTHOUSE articles exposing criminal practices of U.S. Government agencies, officials and powerful pressure groups have been picked up and quoted widely by The New York Times, London Times, Pravda and other major newspapers, newsweeklies and networks across the country and around the world. Check the record.

KUDOS FROM CONGRESS

Senators and Congressmen have been entering extensive excerpts from our regular series, "The Vietnam Veteran," into the Congressional Record. Powerful? Witness: our determined efforts in this area are credited with putting new veterans' rights legislation before Congress.

Bonus: PENTHOUSE has earned "rosebuds" from prestigious MORE Magazine for this "relentless series of exposés on the plight of the Vietnam War veteran."

NATIONAL MAGAZINE AWARD FINALIST

A Columbia University jury recently honored PENTHOUSE. Not for photography, mind you. For reporting excellence. We're delighted and in good company. (Yes, we consider the NEW YORKER, the ATLANTIC, HARPER'S and BUSINESS WEEK excellent company.)

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

We're also delighted to have Editor-Publisher, Bob Guccione, honored as Publisher of the Year by as esteemed an authority as Brandeis University.

Not, please understand, that PENTHOUSE seeks to escape its image. We do not for a minute believe that our readers—including Congressmen, newsmen, clergy, veterans and advertisers—are about to stop appreciating the very special way we uncover women.

TV commentators: burbles from Olympus

by NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

They echo what
everybody is saying

When it comes to cars, America has General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, and AMC. When it comes to comment on the networks' nightly news shows, we have had Eric Severeid on CBS, David Brinkley on NBC, and on ABC, Howard K. Smith and Harry Reasoner (up until September, when he became sole anchorman). Of the two sets of oligopolists, it is the car makers, not the electronic editorialists, who are the more controversial. The commentators are widely known, but almost never quoted. All of them do their work in a kind of celebrated obscurity. The last time one of them (Severeid) said anything that kicked up a fuss, it was the English, not the Americans, who were offended — by a remark about the state of England's national finances.

What do these potentially powerful commentators talk about, and what do they say to their combined audiences of some fifty million Americans? To look carefully at what they have said, and to speculate about their functions, I read a number of transcripts of their commentaries about three of the biggest news stories of the last year and a half.

Because Smith and Reasoner alternated in their commentary, and because

Severeid and Brinkley do not appear every night, an exact matching is seldom possible. All four did, however, discuss the last congressional elections. And one would think that if the job of commentators is to express opinions, then the occasion of national elections might coax from them some of their strongest views.

Not true. The most striking thing about what our commentators said was that they said nothing striking. You probably could have heard stronger opinions in the nation's nursing homes. None of them said anything that could be construed as an endorsement of a candidate or a political party. Before the election Howard K. Smith contented himself with remarking that the outcome was "predictable," and spent the rest of his time talking about the World Food Conference in Rome and the food problem in general. Brinkley anticipated a small voter turnout because "the country is not in good shape" and there is "a feeling that whoever wins, it will not make much difference."

Severeid also foresaw a low turnout owing to "the sharp decline in people's trust in their institutions and their leadership." In his grand way he did tell us not who ought to win, but who would: "Tomorrow is a contest between arithmetic and history where senators and governors are concerned. Arithmetic says Republicans should gain because they have fewer seats at stake. History, the off-year tradition, and the fresh history made by Richard Nixon and inflation, say the Democrats will gain.

And history's say-so is expected to prevail." The last paragraph predicts that the winners will be happy that they have won, but adds that there are tough questions for them down the road. So: "In these matters, history and arithmetic are conspiring to make life miserable for decision-makers nearly everywhere."

The TV viewer the night before the election heard his own opinions given back to him, if he heard anything. Instead of a civics lecture on the importance of voting, he heard repeated what so many were saying at the time, namely that the voters couldn't care less and probably wouldn't vote anyway. One of the unstated functions of the network TV commentators may be to tell us it's okay to think what we're thinking, that certain judgments are within the acceptable spectrum of opinion and that if we articulate them at the office we're still within safe limits.

Nor did the results bring satisfaction to our commentators. "The election hasn't solved any problems for the nation," Harry Reasoner told a goodly portion of it. He concluded with the thought that "the losers on vacation may decide it's just as well they lost."

Howard K. Smith was no happier, remarking that, "The election campaign that ended last night was a bad one." Then, after scoring waste, tax breaks, and subsidies, he reminded us that "we are a nation living beyond our means. . . ." His less than optimistic closer was that "unless our new leaders, now

Nicholas von Hoffman is a columnist for The Washington Post and a sometime broadcast commentator.



safely elected, take courage and act better than they speak, we shall continue to have what we saw yesterday — an electorate turned off with frustration."

On NBC Brinkley said about the same thing: "Our [election] figures show the message was one of generalized irritation and discontent, with inflation and a lot more. . . . That and a lot of other messages arrived yesterday. It will be instructive to see if Washington listens to them or continues — as it has for a generation — listening *mainly to itself*." (The italics imitate the stressed words which make Brinkley sound so snappishly definitive.)

Sevareid, who always talks longer than the other three, opened up by saying, "Fresh breezes are going to blow from Capitol Hill but not until January when the new men and women take their seats." Next came a digression on the old Congress, a digression which wound back to the thought that the freshmen are "a new breed," "idealistic with a practical bent," "willing to live dangerously," with "no awe of the military," and unwilling "to wait upon the aging official leadership of their parties." Still and all, Sevareid warned, there could be "a stalemate of blame-placing" between the new Congress and the old president, which observation led to a perfectly Sevareidian closer: "Cooperation means compromise.

Pride goeth before a fall, and in these matters, purity precedeth paralysis."

Without a Ouija board it is a little difficult to be sure what the white-haired CBS commentator may or may not have had on his distinguished mind, but apparently he was joining the others in saying that he hoped the new congressmen might act with courage, dynamism, and selflessness, but don't count on it because they might be too rigid.

If the commentators contented themselves with commonplaces, they may again have been doing their job of reflecting the low national interest in the election. It may have been obligatory comment about an event which bored them as much as it bored everybody else.

How does this compare with their handling of a very emotional incident like the *Mayagüez* contretemps in May of 1975? Unfortunately, Brinkley didn't comment on this on the days for which I received transcripts, but the words of the other three are instructive.

Smith led with words which promised a demand for military action. "The seizure of an American ship on the high seas . . ." he began, but instead of calling for the Marines, he complained that there has been entirely too much of this sort of thing lately, what with the Ecuadorians snatching our tuna boats.

From there he moved to speculation about what might happen if some of these truculent small nations got hold of an atom bomb. Then, after expressing doubt that we should retaliate against the Cambodians, he finished by saying that we ought to push the disarmament talks with the Russians to make sure that nobody else gets these dangerous toys. A day later his colleague Reasoner took much the same position.

The Smith-Reasoner rejection of use of force in regard to the Cambodians was perhaps the most concise statement of opinion, any opinion, that I could find in the transcripts. Sevareid was considerably murkier.

From his perch in the clouds, Eric did two pieces on the subject. In the first he characterized the Cambodians as "a motley group of militarized peasants" and approved of moving the Marines into place against them. "Some such reaction was necessary if we were not to appear utterly supine," he said. At the same time he counseled "caution and patience" — have you ever heard of anybody who didn't? — and then drew our attention to the argument that the real test of American resolution in the Pacific was taking place in North Korea. This was a popular idea in exalted Washington circles in those weeks and Sevareid's scripts often allude to what they're saying in Georgetown. Having alerted us to the Korean menace, he concluded with the announcement that "we are not yet free of the specter of still another Asian war." Sevareid likes to finish his pieces with what looms large and ominous.

Two days later, with the *Mayagüez* light opera concluded, he was back on the air to say, "Nothing succeeds like success and no success matches a successful gamble." After that came much equivocating about the rights and wrongs and ins and outs of the gamble: North Korea is again adverted to and the much-quoted John Kennedy remark about success having a hundred fathers while failure is an orphan is requested. The closer is as fine a piece of Sevareid as you'll find: "Anyway the ship affair is over. Winston Churchill once said, 'I don't bother about countries like Cambodia, and they don't bother me.' A good precept for a bad season."

A good precept for any season. On

January 9, five months before, Severeid used the same Churchill quote in commenting on President Ford's request to Congress for more military supplies to Cambodia and Vietnam. On that occasion Eric the Cloud-Wrapped seemed to be against more aid to Cambodia. The later use of the quote is more difficult to puzzle out. On balance he seems not too enthusiastic about the use of force, but then again he apologizes for it.

In August of 1974, all four of our commentators came up against the story that gave them a delicious opportunity for weighty comment: President Nixon's departure from office.

Anticipating the pardon, Reasoner concluded the first of his two statements on the subject by saying, "Give him amnesty and draw a curtain over this scene. Not for his sake. For ours." That was the only down-to-earth suggestion uttered by any of the commentators on the subject. Several nights later Howard K. Smith pointed out that Mr. Ford would be our first non-elected president under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment. "I used to have one/sixty-millionth of a grip on the presidency. I treasured that power. They've taken it away from me. I want it back," he told the millions in front of their sets; his recommendation as to how that might be done was to change the Twenty-fifth Amendment.

In their other comments, the two ABC commentators played a supportive role. I had the feeling at the time that the national media in general believed the country was suffering, divided, anguished, and in dire need of reassurance and succor.

Except when we pay our income taxes, it is probably through television that most of us experience the reality of the national political union: it may be that what is important for us is that our commentators appear at their scheduled times to burble at us. The precise nature of their burbling is less important than our seeing them do it, provided they say nothing too terribly alarming.

If that be so, the Howard K. Smith effort of August 9 was one of your better bumbles. First he told us that "the system works," but, lest there be any untoward elation in Iowa, he added, "It doesn't work that well." Other countries using the parliamentary system are

able to dismiss unwanted heads of government with less fuss. But since we can't do that we ought to realize that "the cause of Watergate is bad campaign finance practice, too much special interest loot in politics hunting for mischief to do. . . . The system needs changing," but alas, alack, "Congress is moving with unwilling, leaden feet."

A first-rate burble. First he tells us, in effect, that we're basically all right, Jack, but he avoids going overboard in self-congratulation, which might irritate some viewers. His criticism of the system is also of the soothing, familiar variety. Campaign financing and special interest influence have been topics of public censure for 100 years. The ending about Congress's leaden feet is so traditional it borders on ritual, and what can be more comforting than that?

Brinkley said essentially the same thing, although his style makes it appear that he might have been saying something else. The NBC commentator uses more affective language. Hence he has Nixon leaving "the White House crying and wondering how he could pay his taxes," an emotive expression of contempt which it is hard to conceive of his three colleagues using in regard to a president, even a fallen one. The almost complete absence of relative clauses in his scripts, joined with his contrametric stresses in delivery, gives Brinkley's

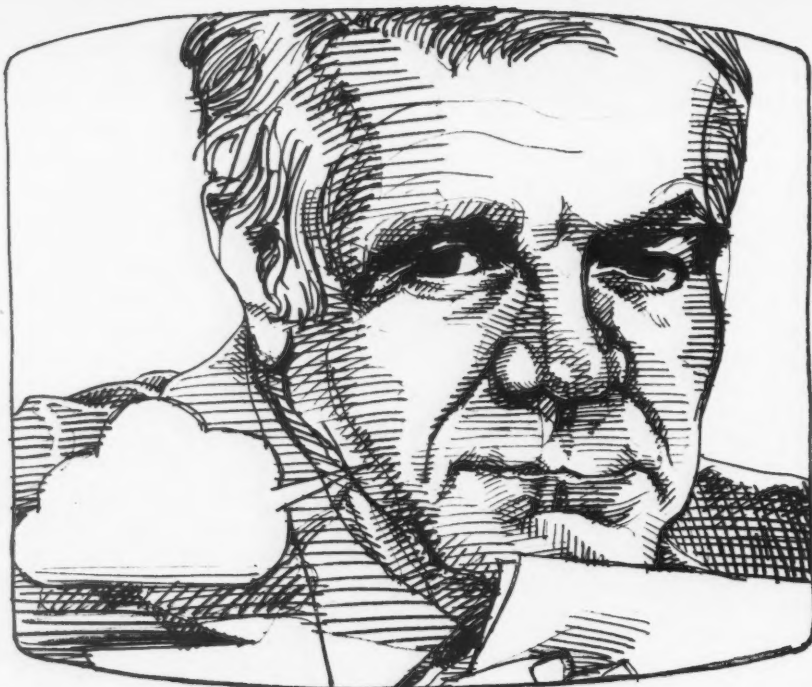
presentations an appearance of power and candor that masks the conventionality of the thought.

Brinkley, like Smith, believes the system works, but he says so obliquely: "Few countries in the world could have gone through the turmoil of changing government like this and got it all settled while its military remained quietly in its barracks, minding its own business, playing *checkers* and drinking *beer*."

Brinkley's concluding moral is identical to Smith's: "Neither does it [the Constitution] prescribe a remedy for the arrogantly powerful *presidency* that began long *before* Nixon . . . unless Congress can find the energy and the *will* to *control* it. This time, the Constitution worked and the country got *through* it. But if the Washington *establishment*, particularly Congress, cannot *learn* from this and do better in the *future*, not even Madison, Jefferson and Hamilton can *save* us." You couldn't ask for a better burble.

"The formal institutions by which we govern ourselves have worked," said Severeid in one of his two offerings on the subject that week. "The law has prevailed, the people have held steady." He called for no remedial action by Congress although he conceded that "Our political party and electoral processes have worked badly. . . . But those processes have never been seri-





ously institutionalized in this country. They work hit or miss."

Eric is our large loomer. The specifics of his message may be hard to glom onto, but the themes are not: Jerry Ford toasts his muffins and shows promise of being another Truman; order, stability and simplicity are what we need. Severeid's is the voice of old age, of the Supreme Court, of the Georgetown clubman ever conscious of history with a capital *h*. "These are, with no serious doubt, the last hours of the 37th Presidency of the United States," is how he led off his August 8 broadcast. "Other Presidents, including Washington, were tempted to resign. None did." He sounded like Henry Adams without the cynicism and melancholia.

Of the quadruplets, Smith and Reasoner are the two most unequivocally judgmental. Smith was unmistakably for Rockefeller's confirmation by Congress; Reasoner was just as clearly critical of President Ford's riding around in the back seat of a car with Francisco Franco. But they may be much less satisfying to the television audience. Their scripts tend to be — shall I say it? — linear, often beginning with a premise, after which come a few scraps of germaine information, followed by a bit of not wholly irrelevant argument and a conclusion that has some sort of logical connection with the

antecedent words.

That is not Brinkley's way. He endorsed Rockefeller too, but not straight out. Rather his closer was, "In *that* context Rockefeller will — as much as anything else be *Rockefeller* . . . a figure everyone knows . . . from a famous and admired *family* . . . an American public *fixture* for twenty-odd years . . . liberal on *some* points and conservative on *others* . . . and who with his very *public* personality can help — after these years of remoteness and unreality — make government *real* again."

Superb television writing, not only for the medium, but also for the unique Brinkley performing in the medium. The scarcity of verbs, the pounding procession of appositive phrases, and the outcropping nouns combine, with his delivery, to give what you might call an implied endorsement of Mr. Rockefeller's nomination. However, if that is what gives Brinkley his powerful, crunching definitiveness, it is also safe enough for network television. Upon inspecting the transcript, close readers will find words so tepid that they make dropping a postcard of complaint hardly worthwhile.

If Brinkley is in a sense the most emotional of the four, the one who most nearly is the bitching taxpayer on the bar stool next to you, all of them express more or less the same recurring at-

titudes: there is too much bureaucracy, and too many tax loopholes; politicians are slugs; unity is good and division is bad; bold leadership is what is called for — and ain't it a shame we have deviated from the purity and good sense of our ancestors?

If Brinkley displays a patina of pessimism while he purveys these diffuse judgments, and if Smith and Reasoner are more down-to-earth and practical in their attack, Severeid is the most confusing. While the other three implicitly get you to identify with them because of a certain common man-ness in their stance, Eric the Grave is the most aristocratic in manner and the most difficult to understand.

His scripts are by far the longest of the four. They are written in a style meant to be read, not to be delivered on the air and listened to, but even so they frequently make no sense. It's as though he refuses to admit that the art of broadcasting is based on a judicious sense of omission. He puts in too much material in defiance of his time limitations and then can't develop whatever thought it was he had in mind.

Hence his scripts are loaded with paragraphs like "Government generally responds to the laws of Darwin, not those of Newton. But there's reason to expect — to hope, anyway, that this moving object, Gerald Ford, will continue to move in the direction it's moving." In context he seems to be saying that Ford has been doing good work and there is reason to think he'll carry on, but what is all this Newton-Darwin stuff? It makes no sense in context or out.

Summarize the principal points of a Severeid script, line them up and what you get is almost incomprehensible. Here's one delivered on the occasion of President Ford's visit to Japan:

1. The Japanese say Ford's visit is epochal.
2. To say this is verbal overkill.
3. The trip itself is political overkill.
4. There should be drama at a summit meeting but there is none on this one.
5. People in the U.S. are irritated that Ford is abroad when we have no vice-president, the economy is in trouble, and the Middle East may blow up.

6. The Japanese will want Washington to make sure the Israelis don't start another war because they are dependent on Arab oil.

7. The Russian position on the Middle East is unknown so if any good comes out of this Far Eastern trip it will be because of what Brezhnev says to Ford at Vladivostok.

8. Vladivostok is a duller city than Moscow.

9. When Ford departs, Kissinger will take a jet to Peking because the U.S. is the "balancer" between Russia and China.

10. These jet trips use up a lot of fuel.

11. By the time Ford had reached Tokyo (on his way to Vladivostok) he had flown twenty hours and eaten an eight-course French meal.

12. Overfeeding visiting dignitaries is a well-known strategem of Japanese negotiators.

And now the concluding sentences verbatim: "Jet lag, eight-course meals, and *sake* make the fine print in the Japanese contracts seem unimportant. And thus the modern Japanese industrial empire was built. But the noble sacrifices made by those unheralded American business executives have not gone for naught. Mr. Ford had a sound sleep before the official talking began. This may not do a thing for him in the Gallup poll, but travel-wise, Japan-wise observers here are gratified. A sleeping President never yet signed a bad deal."

What the hell does all that mean? Up to about point seven, he seems to be arguing in a straight line, but after that he goes blooey. There is no reason to demand that a commentator be logical in the strict sense of that word; he can leave his audience with nothing more than a vague, hard-to-pin-down impression, but here Severeid has introduced so many uncoordinated ideas, half-achieved jokes and abrupt turns of topic that he leaves us only a puzzle.

In spite of these non-sense commentaries Severeid's work seems to be happily accepted by the network and by the public. If a commentator can be successful without having to deliver an opinion, create a mood, or reinforce an attitude, but can get by acting like a very handsome, very statesmanlike Professor Irwin Corey, perhaps one of the functions of commentators is to give the illu-

sion that free speech and debate is taking place without running the risks of having any. The network can look responsible and responsive while keeping Congress and the Federal Communications Commission tranquilized.

There may be no other way for the networks to operate. Stronger and more precisely articulated opinions would invite demands for equal time response and that kind of thing is a nightmare on a news show.

A quiet, personal burble, not an editorial, may also be the outer limit of public toleration. Certainly the networks go out of their way to present their commentaries in the least effective way possible. The talking head sits in front of the camera and reads his statement. No pictures are used, no production, none of the techniques which can make the medium so powerful.

That may be just as well. Look at how the depiction of what is presented as news upsets people. Disturbing and emotional editorializing to an audience that cannot talk back, but is only on the receiving end of the message, could cause no end of trouble and very little good in a mass democratic society. Perhaps if there were many more networks offering a broad selection of opinions and pushing a number of conflicting values, the television commentator might be allowed to func-

tion more like the newspaper editorialist.

Occasionally network television has put hot words and strong opinions on the air. For three years I belched rather than burbled on CBS's *60 Minutes*. Not only because of the fairness rule, but also because no sane corporation can afford to have it appear that somebody like me is speaking for it editorially, we used a debate format.

My amicable opponent, James J. Kilpatrick, and I had a good time, but I don't think we resolved the problems raised above. With two people — barring the invention of the sixty-one-minute hour — there is less time for either of them to develop a rational argument. On some topics we couldn't talk at all because we were in agreement. On others the adversary nature of the format, as well as its theatricality, tended to push us into making caricatures of ourselves as Mister Right and Mister Left.

Pending that distant day when the institutional framework of broadcasting is changed in some way that nobody yet agrees on, don't expect more from our TV commentators than leonine denunciation of red tape in government. But you folks in the daily newspaper business, don't puff up. Check your editorial page and you'll notice that it's reading more and more like Severeid is talking. ■



We're sorry

What if A&P's new humble pie ad campaign were to prove catching?

by JEFF GREENFIELD

The disembodied voice solemnly recites the confession while the A&P symbol fills the television screen:

A&P has always stood for two things:

Price and pride.

Price and pride together made the great A&P great.

Then, somehow, we let price and pride get out of balance.

We forgot our own philosophy: *price without pride* is no bargain.

And we suffered for it.

Thus is fired the opening gun of a \$10 million television campaign, buttressed by full-page ads in newspapers around the country, to make A&P once again a profitable leader in the hearts of America's shoppers. Specifically, the campaign is an attempt to recover from A&P's disastrous attempt to convert itself into a "discount" supermarket through its "WEO" effort (WEO stood for "Where Economy Originates"), an attempt that cost the chain millions of dollars and its long-held supremacy among food chains. Safeway is now the largest.

What makes the A&P approach so fascinating, however, is its tone: a \$700 million-a-year enterprise openly acknowledging a mistake in judgment and a failure. It is not a "first." A few years back, the Ford Motor Company used a spokesman who mentioned the Edsel as proof that the company was not perfect; and in 1969, New York mayor John Lindsay talked of his "mistakes" in a reelection ad. (The mistakes he acknowledged did not include fiscal mismanagement.) Indeed, candor seems to be a hot political commodity. With Betty Ford speaking publicly of her sexual affection for her husband, Jack Ford acknowledging his use of marijuana, and Abe Beame admitting partial responsibility for New York's plight, the admission of human foibles may be as

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important to candidates as a dog and an American flag.

But the specter of so big a company admitting so fundamental a mistake — and admitting that it has *suffered* because of that mistake — raises some intriguing possibilities for the future. If the anticorporate, skeptical, Naderite consumer really wants his corporations self-effacing and contrite, we may be in for television commercials like these:

□ "I'm Ed MacMahon, and most of you know me as a happy, easygoing fellow who will laugh at Carson if Johnny clears his throat. But tonight, I'm in a serious mood — deadly serious. Because the folks at General Motors have asked me to tell you how sorry they are.

"Now it's bad enough that for years we agreed with Ford and Chrysler to

TV AND ADVERTISING

hold back developments on pollution control . . . or that we helped to wipe out the mass transportation system of Los Angeles . . . or that we helped encourage planned obsolescence which wasted incredible amounts of manpower, energy, and raw materials.

"But on top of that, we made the Corvair. And when Ralph Nader tried to talk about its problems, we hired a detective to follow him.

"Now General Motors wants another chance. And the way you can help make sure we never do this again is to buy our cars — and *only* our cars — to show that you appreciate a company that's big enough to admit when it's wrong. And believe me, folks, G.M. is big enough."

□ "Hi, Johnny Cash here for America's railroads. Ya know, back when my granddaddy was no higher 'n a hubcap on a semi, the railroads pretty much had things their own way: coolie labor, company towns, shipping rates that bled the farmers dry, legislatures we bought 'n' sold like popcorn . . . yep, those were mighty high times.

"Well, then came the New Deal, the auto-mo-bile, the trucks and buses, and the suburbs. And now the railroads are on the ropes. Bankruptcies, insolvencies, mergers, Amtraks and Conrails . . . once we had lowers and uppers, but now we're just on our uppers.

"Well friends, here's your chance to really let us have it. As you know, we lose money on every passenger train we run. So be a part of this railroad rip-off. You can put us further into debt and despair by riding the railroads every chance you get. After all the years we took you for a ride, why not take us for a ride real soon?"

□ (*Desolate, stained beach with oil-covered birds*) "These gulls will never fly again. This beach will take years to restore. This water is foul. The entire quality of life for thousands of Californians will be poorer . . . for months if not years.

"We're Continental Oil, and we care. Why do we care? Because it was our oil that spilled onto this beach and caused this damage to our environment. And we're sorry. Why are we sorry? Because this spill, and others like it, helped make the environmental movement what it is today — a real pain in the butt. Yes, instead of a few bird-watchers and other loonies, thousands and thousands of people are organizing to stop offshore oil drilling, strip-mining, pipelines, and all the other things we need to prosper and grow.

"So when we tell you we're never going to permit another oil spill like this one, you can believe us. Because we want to make as much as we can. And the only way to make all that money is to make sure this never happens again — so we can concentrate on getting our tax shelters back. Yes, America — the next time you see an oil slick on your beach, remember — Continental Oil is sorry about that."

□ (*A herd of rampaging bears*) "Merrill Lynch is bearish on America. That's right, investors. Remember all



The price-and-pride duo in A & P's television commercial

those bulls we threw at you a year or two back? Well that's exactly what it was — a lot of bull. Who knew from Arab oil embargoes? Who knew from Russian wheat deals? Who knew from 12 percent inflation, record-high interest rates, the failure of the Peruvian anchovy catch?

"Yes, America, Merrill Lynch knows better now: our economy is headed right down into the privy, where it's going to stay for a long, long time to come. So try diamonds, pork belly futures, gold bars, canned foods, and a good old Winchester parked near your attic window when the collapse comes. And what about all those dandy stocks we touted for all those years? Listen — if we *really* knew what stocks were going up and what stocks were going down, would we be in this cockamammy business?"

And finally, the commercial that is surely going to show up one night, during the *Late, Late Show*, in between the "Great Polka Hit" ad, the "Fabulous Fifties" ad, the "Sensational Sixties" ad, and the "Frantic Forties" ad. A well dressed man, standing on a beach in southern California:

□ "Hi, remember me? I recorded some of the most famous tapes in American history. And now, through a special one-time-only offer, you can enjoy these incredible tapes that are not available in any record store. [cough] Pardon me — heh, heh. Yes, you'll hear all those favorites that sparked headlines from San Clemente to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. To get these tapes, just send several thousand dollars in unmarked bills to the third telephone booth from the right at the Encino Airport, and. . . ."

Default at The New

A great newspaper failed to understand what was happening in its home town

by MARTIN MAYER

The story of New York City's financial collapse can be told entirely truthfully on a number of different levels. On the simplest level, it is the tale of a Ponzi game in municipal paper — the regular and inevitably increasing issuance of notes to be paid off not by the future taxes or revenues certified to be available for that purpose but by the sale of future notes. Like all chain-letter swindles, Ponzi games self-destruct when the seller runs out of suckers, as New York did in spring 1975. The triggering event, in February, was the almost accidental discovery by a young lawyer representing Bankers Trust that the city did not in fact have the unpaid accounts receivable that were supposed to secure the repayment of a new issue of notes.

On another level, the story to be told is one of a refusal by the city's political leadership to restrain the programs offered to voters, or the benefits offered to employees, within the limited resources available to pay the bills. This refusal was flatly stated by Robert Wagner as early as 1965, and it became a periodic litany of the Lindsay administration, which warned every time a budget was presented that the city's expenditures were rising at a 15 percent annual clip though its revenues rose at a rate of only 5 percent a year. By the time the Beame administration took over, City Hall thought it an entirely adequate reply to criticisms of the annual deficit that the critic had not proposed specific economies or new revenue sources to close the gap.

In this scenario, the triggering event was a lawsuit to enjoin as unconstitutional the sale of more than half a billion dollars of ten-year bonds the state legislature had authorized the city to issue to wipe out past deficit notes and close a new budget gap in fiscal 1975. For that year, the *real* deficit in the city's expense budget rose well over a billion dollars, with every reason to believe the numbers would keep rising in fiscal 1976. The state's Court of Appeals by a 4-3 vote ultimately permitted the bond sale, not wishing to be the proximate cause of the city's default; but the market, alerted by the suit and staggered by New York issues that were running \$600 million and more a month, was no longer willing to buy New York paper.

A variant of this version starts with accusations that

Mayor Lindsay bought peace in his time by giving the city's labor unions pension contracts that would roughly triple by 1980 the retirement benefits the city was promising to pay its employees. According to the most detailed study of the city's pension obligations, published under the auspices of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University in fall 1974, the contributions to the pension plans required by these contracts would rise to \$2.5 billion a year before the end of the decade. Under the New York State Constitution, pensions to public employees stand on a par with payment of principal and interest on public borrowings: the increase in future pension obligations directly reduced the effective "cover" for the city's notes and bonds, diminishing investor enthusiasm for these instruments at precisely the moment the city was trying to sell more of them. Here there is no single triggering agent, just a reduction in demand that occurred gradually but in step with the increase in supply.

Yet a third explanation of the city's tragedy emphasizes its failure to develop an accounting system that related revenues to expenditures or permitted control over the outflow of money from City Hall. The gag that New York ran a \$12-billion-a-year operation like a mom-and-pop store was literally true: money was thrown into the cash register as it arrived and taken out as it was needed, and receipts were never earmarked for programs in real life, though they were in each year's solemn documentation.

Some of the problems in the accounting system reflected the rapid growth of grants downstream from higher levels of government. Washington tends to pay its last installments a little late, and Albany tends to pay everything *very* late. The state's fiscal year runs from April 1st to March 31st. Under Nelson Rockefeller, the state got in the habit of mandating programs that the city was to start soon after the beginning of *its* fiscal year (which runs July 1st through June 30th), without providing any money at all in the state's current budget. There would still be time to bring the city out even, after all, if the next state legislature provided the money in the first quarter of the state's next budget, which coincides with the final quarter of the city's current budget. The result was to force the city to borrow very large sums on "revenue anticipation notes" to fund state-supported programs. The fact that the city had so many legitimate "RANS" to issue every year blinded not only the market but the city's own finance officers to the fact that a growing fraction of its notes were not legitimate at all but were part of a Ponzi game.

Whatever the story line chosen, the denouement was the creation of an accumulated deficit of well over \$3 billion financed by notes, and another \$1.5 billion capitalized in bonds, in a city supposedly functioning under constitutional and legal mandates for a balanced budget. In addition to that cash deficit, future taxpayers had been burdened with a hid-

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den deficit of similar size in the pension funds. In the forecast fiscal 1980 budget, the city would have to put up about \$4.5 billion to pay debt service and make pension contributions. Its tax receipts in that year are most unlikely to be as high as \$8 billion. There is no possible combination of personnel cuts and program reductions that would permit the city to pay almost 60 percent of its tax receipts to redeem prior obligations. By the beginning of 1975, then, on any projection, the city was visibly and hopelessly bankrupt, and the sort of remedies applied in a bankruptcy court would be necessary to maintain its services, whether or not the word "bankruptcy" was actually employed. (This is not hindsight. In the January 1975 issue of *Harper's*, I wrote that "New York, alas, really is bust . . . the Penn Central business all over again, but with public rather than corporate officers performing the deception.")

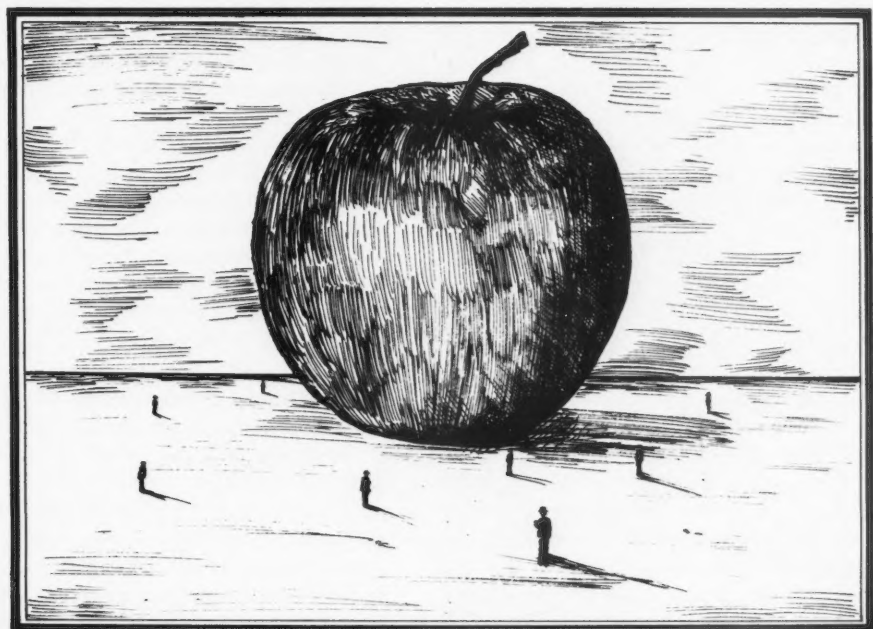
This disaster had been a long time in coming, yet New Yorkers were profoundly and repeatedly shocked as the situation developed.

Everyone who did business with the city knew there were termites in the foundations of municipal finance, but none of the city's news media had detected the extent of the destruction. It is not surprising that the broadcast news media, the lightly staffed *Post*, or the other-directed *News* failed to explore this remote if crucial area of city life. But the *Times* considers itself, and probably is, the greatest newspaper in the world. It had the resources and should have had the expertise to detail for its sophisticated readership a deepening crisis that was going to affect the lives of all New Yorkers.

Public ignorance was one of the reasons why the city got in so deep. "No one ever won an election," said one of the many "News Analysis" features the *Times* devoted to the crisis, "by proposing to give the people less" — but in fact there would have been an overwhelming constituency for frugality in city government if the consequences of continued fecklessness had been understood. Editorials in *The New York Times* did denounce the fiscal trickery practiced at City Hall, and did not flinch from the threat word "bankruptcy." Nobody who read the news stories, or the "News Analysis" that often runs beside them, could have discovered how bad things were.

Indeed, the editorial writers operated more on a sort of feel for the subject than on information: they seemed to share the public's view of themselves as little boys crying wolf. "The city is sliding into bankruptcy with dismaying speed," said an editorial in November 1974 — but then its author added the comment that "the municipal deficit could run as high as \$1 billion" and "the gap would be roughly twice as great if the city had not resorted to expensive borrowing to pay its current bills. . . ." Even while scolding the city, the *Times* had accepted its preposterous bookkeeping, in which deficits papered over by admitted borrowings did not have to be counted as deficits.

Six months before that editorial, the *Times* had carried a straightforward report, with not an inkling of concern from anyone quoted in the story, on how Mayor Beame was going to balance the city's fiscal 1975 budget. In addition to the \$520 million of straight-out borrowing in a newly created "Stabilization Reserve Fund" (most of it to clean



up notes issued in previous years), the budget as presented in the spring had included advances of \$114 million from the state's 1975-76 budget; \$119 million of borrowing from the state against the 1975-76 school year; \$15 million in advances against the motor fuel tax to be collected in September 1975; \$700 million-plus of operating expenses to be paid out of the sale of bonds in the separate capital budget; \$80 million of advances in welfare aid; and another \$153 million in "sewer and rent balances" and "pension-interest surpluses."

The last two of these are worthy of special notice. The first reflects the accident that a number of the city's contracts and taxes had always run on the calendar year; by switching them to the fiscal year (water for '74, sewers for '75), Beame was able to get eighteen months of payment into one budget. The second is the result of a remarkable piece of state legislation that permitted the city to take into its operating budget (originally with a two-year time lag) all earnings on its employee pension funds that exceeded a 4 percent return on the funds. Intended originally to provide incentive for more effective investment of those funds, when federal government paper was yielding 3 percent or less, that law had become in the high-interest 1970s an invitation to the city to rob its employees' pension funds. In its final grant of aid to balance the city's 1975 budget, the state legislature eliminated the two-year time lag, permitting the city to rob three years' worth at once (upping the city's fiscal '75 revenue from this source to \$261 million). The *Times* took no notice of the change until the following March, when an editorial criticized the misappropriation of trust funds and noted also that this \$261 million of "excess" interest came out of funds that had lost \$334 million in market value in a year of declining stock and bond prices.

Beame's specific proposals for fiscal 1975 were not subjected to "News Analysis" or to editorial treatment. When they had first begun to surface a few weeks before, a "News Analysis" column had offered a general explanation: "The city is like a person facing a year of heavy expenses. He can arrange to work overtime or get a weekend job to increase his income, he can cut his expenses or, pressed beyond these expedients, he can ask his friendly finance company to tide him over in hopes that next year will be better. . . . A fourth technique . . . is the rejiggering of the numbers. . . . There can be room for honest differences of opinion that can run into millions of dollars." A week later, a cute article in Sunday's "News of the Week in Review" looked at Beame's first four months in office, with emphasis on his emerging budget proposals, and on his "report card" gave him an A in Arithmetic and an "incomplete" in Applied Mathematics.

Among the "honest differences of opinion" the city was known to be exploiting to hide the true condition of its finances was the "rollover" of one year's expenses into the next year's actual payments. By this device, the cash accounting of outlays for a fiscal year could be made to match the budget, more or less, even though expenses had exceeded the budgeted totals. The money raised in July and August to pay bills that should have been paid in June never appeared in the budget for either the previous or the current

fiscal year. Though this deception was denounced a number of times in editorials, its magnitude was never investigated by the news staff, and the practice was not noted in the financial-page stories that annually described the ever-increasing summer note issues by the city (\$800 million in July 1974).

Meanwhile, the revenue side of the New York budget was being beefed up by taking in for reporting purposes revenues claimed to have accrued to the city, though they weren't paid, during the fiscal year; in the fiscal 1974 budget, these "end-of-year general fund accruals" totaled \$358 million. Without objection from the *Times* or the bond-rating services, the city's books were kept on a cash basis for expenditures and an accrual basis for receipts, hiding upwards of \$400 million of real deficits.

The distant thunder of the future collapse sounded in October 1974, when the banks that had underwritten an issue of city bonds found themselves stuck with the paper: no buyers. This problem was not immediately reported, and a critical statement about the city's budget practices from the State Charter Commission the week the balloon began to rise was brushed aside in a news column with a reporter's comment that "it seemed more descriptive of the highly public fiscal maneuvering of John V. Lindsay's mayoralty rather than the quiet dealmanship of the Beame administration."

On October 23, 1974 the *Times* carried what may have been the most remarkable story in the whole zoo. "Mayor Beame," the report ran, "struck an optimistic note yesterday by asserting that the city's credit position had improved 'considerably' during the last 15 years and was 'solid and strong.'" The "information" adduced to back this claim was that the city's funded debt had declined as a proportion of the total value of the real estate in the city. (This one was wrong two ways: the non-funded note issues, nonexistent fifteen years before and now enough to increase the total debt by two-thirds, were omitted, as was the increase in the proportion of the city's real estate that is tax-exempt.) As lagniappe, the Beame claim threw in the "fact" that debt service had declined as a proportion of total revenues (but the share of those revenues represented by state and federal aid had almost tripled over the fifteen years, and the ratio between debt service and the city's own tax receipts, from which debt must be repaid, had worsened drastically). There was no mention in either Beame's statement or the *Times* report of the accelerating pension obligations, which are from a lender's point of view another form of debt to be paid off later.

A week later, a "News Analysis" returned to the problem of investor confidence in the city's paper, and undertook to reply to the suggestion that the city should operate in a businesslike fashion, raising taxes or reducing expenses when the budget got out of balance: "The politicians answer — and the answer appears plausible — that the city cannot be run like a business because it is not a business. . . . It is organized to provide services that are so essential that they must be provided no matter how high the costs." But other cities, then unnoticed in the *Times*, many of them

hurt worse than New York by population shifts, were managing to provide essential services without accumulating operating deficits.

On November 1, a front-page story about the difficulties Morgan Guaranty was experiencing with the resale of the city's paper said flatly, "There are no doubts that the city can and will pay its debts." By then, however, there were obvious and growing doubts; and the only way the city's paper could be sold was by placing extremely high interest rates on it and peddling the stuff far from the city. Bank of America in San Francisco became co-manager of one of the city's issues, and on another one provided more than half the sales. In fall 1975, when Bank of America offered several statesmanlike utterances about the need for the federal government to assure the repayment of all the city's paper, the *Times* presented its comments as the observations of a disinterested third party far away, without noting the bank's heavy involvement in the marketing of the city's obligations, only a year before.

On February 20, 1975 a story on an inside page told of New York's first cash crisis, and of the hurried passage by the state legislature of a bill permitting the city to raid its bond-redemption sinking fund to pay salaries. On March 1, another story on an inside page told of the cancellation of a note sale following the discovery by a young lawyer named Marion J. Epley, who worked for the law firm of White and Case and was representing Bankers Trust, that the city did not in fact have the accounts receivable it was pledging behind a note for \$260 million. The emphasis in the story, however, was on city controller Harrison Goldin's outrage at what he called "a sudden demand by the underwriters, unprecedented in the history of the city, for data that could not physically be compiled, checked and verified in the short time available."

This was a most peculiar episode. One of the long-established criticisms of the city's management was that it took as revenue in its budget the entire real-estate tax assessed against the city's property, regardless of whether the tax was paid or not. The South Bronx and stretches of Brooklyn looked like Hiroshima half a mile from ground zero. The area contained property that could not be given away (let alone sold) if the city should seize it for tax delinquency. Nevertheless, the city counted all the unpaid tax bills on such property among its receivables, and sold "tax anticipation notes" to make up the shortfall in actual receipts. This juggling, proper or not, was at least legal. What was not legal was *overstating* the amount of unpaid taxes and selling anticipation notes against taxes that had in fact already been paid; and that was what the city had done in February, on the grounds that it needed the money.

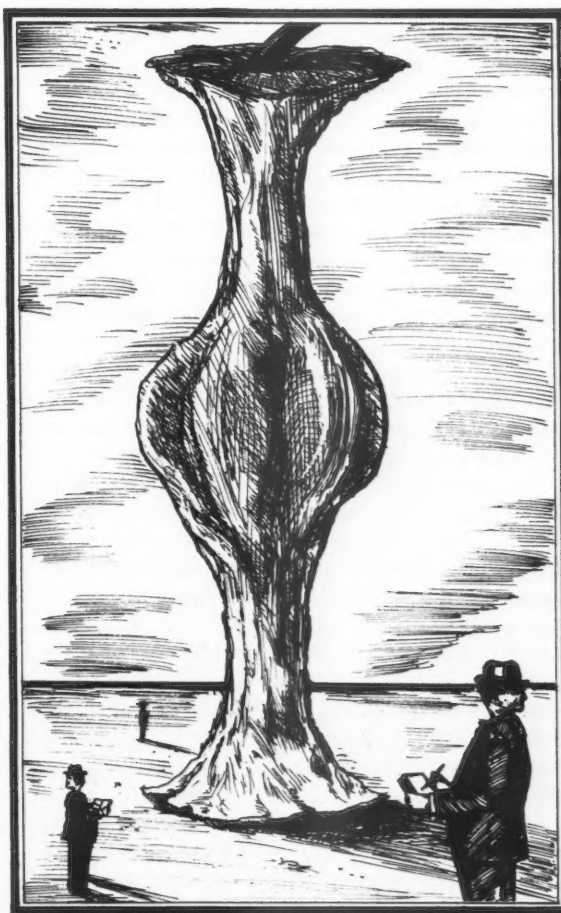
The *Times* (unlike *The Wall Street Journal*) got this story right, though the paper presented the city's denials of the fraud even more prominently than the facts; but the story was never followed up. When the city came back to market in March and sold \$800 million of simple notes — for the last time, probably, in the lifetimes of men now living — the *Times* noted, again on an inside page and without comment, that the bankers were demanding affidavits from both the corporation counsel of the city and the attorney general

of the state that there were valid anticipations of future receipts to pay off the notes. The attorney general supplied his affidavit, one of the stories mentioned, only on the stipulation that it would not be used by the banks to help sell the paper to the public.

Some months later, the state controller reported to a committee of the state assembly that the city had repeatedly issued both tax anticipation notes and revenue anticipation notes on false statements of anticipated receipts (some of the tax anticipation notes were based on anticipation of taxes from universities, hospitals and other tax-exempt property). If reporters had dug this out when the bad vibes first began to be felt, the true dimensions of the city's trouble would have been visible somewhat earlier. But by March 1975 it was too late to prevent the collapse.

"Can New York City default on its debt and go bankrupt?" asked a *Times* "News Analysis" on April 11. "The answer is no, and it can be given without qualification, according to city and private financial experts, for legal, fiscal and political reasons. . . ."

The *Times* was by no means alone in its failure to evaluate the true financial condition of the city. One story quoted from a representative of the Citizens Budget Commission a statement that "nobody says the city won't repay



Dennis Hermanson

its debt." Moody's continued to give the city's notes an investment grade rating until fall 1975. (Another branch of the same ratings service gave Penn Central commercial paper a "prime" rating until two weeks before that bankruptcy.) The banks kept selling the paper: "Why," Senator Edward Brooke asked Walter Wriston of First National City, "didn't you try to protect, not only your bank, but the city and state of New York as well?" — and he got a feeble response. If the professionals go so wrong, critics should not be too hard on reporters.

Still, the facts were plain enough, and a decent respect for the opinion of mankind should have given reporters an understanding that 9-percent paper exempt from federal, state, and city taxes simply could not have become unsalable if it were, in truth, a safe investment. The failure of both professional and lay reports to reveal the true condition of the city heightened the tragedy by permitting the state as well as the city to pretend for months that an insolvency problem was really a cash-flow problem — that a situation in which there were real and inescapable losses to be fairly apportioned among lenders, employees, and residents could be treated as a psychological malaise that would pass if only the city were permitted to borrow some more money.

In their appearances before congressional committees, the governor, the mayor, and the businessmen representing the recently created Municipal Assistance Corporation kept insisting that nobody but the residents of the city and its laid-off employees would have to be a loser from the city's insolvency — a loan guarantee "wouldn't cost the federal government a dime." Not until mid-November, when time was beginning to run out, did the state begin to explore ways of cutting down on the city's future debt service and pension payments — and the plan proposed then (I write before its fate is known) was essentially a way to get over the next twelve months, to minimize the price to politically powerful labor unions and bankers, to maintain the pretense that the people who live in the city can carry in perpetuity the crushing burdens laid upon them by the mismanagement of the last decade.

By November, however, people who cared about the city had to support whatever plan, however short-term and inadequate, the politicians might provide. Like any insolvent debtor, the city had scrambled about for six months to put its hand on any available dollar to pay off the most pressing creditor — in this case, the people whose notes came due each month. State and federal aid and real-estate tax receipts which continued to appear in the budgets offered for examination by Congress and the White House had in fact been advanced to the city and dribbled out to the grateful rich. What looked like an almost-balanced budget on paper was really, as a *Times* editorial noted, short by about \$3 billion. Without federal loans or guarantees, the city would come into December without the cash to pay for power and light, or food for the school lunches, or welfare grants, or salaries. Any expedient would be better than that.

Again, the *Times* noted the cash shortage in an editorial, not in its news columns. There was in a sense no "news": neither the state nor the city was making statements about the possible future costs of paying off each month's

noteholders at par — or about loading an ever-increasing share of the burden of ultimate insolvency on the noteholders who were scheduled to be paid later. In a moment of candor rare among state or city officials, Senator Javits at a banking committee hearing on October 18 commented that he had been unhappy to see \$453 million go out to noteholders the day before, because as a lawyer who had represented some bankrupt concerns he saw the city illegitimately creating a class of prior creditors. (These comments were expunged from the printed record, and they were not reported anywhere. I know about them because I was the witness before the committee to whom they were addressed.) Between President Ford's apparently total insensitivity to the city's needs and the failures of the press to delineate the causes and consequences of those needs, the intelligent legislation proposed by Congressmen Reuss and Ashley, which might have established preconditions for the city's recovery, became the sidebar rather than, as it should have been, the focus of consideration.

The *Times* made a major effort on New York City, and produced several strikingly important stories based on leaks from the state and city controllers' offices and from the state assembly committee investigating the city's paper. Only one major episode was missed entirely: a visit to Albany in April by the chief executives of the big banks, who were reported to have gone to discuss what the state could do to rescue the city, when their real mission was to tell Governor Carey that the state by itself could not possibly bear the burden. There was also one piece of brilliant analytical reporting, by Steven R. Weisman, on the appalling mess in the financing of the city's Mitchell-Lama middle-income housing projects, where the refusal of some residents to pay the co-op maintenance increases required by rising interest rates and fuel costs had led the city to misappropriate maintenance payments from other residents, who were meeting their obligations. (When the mortgages on these properties were pledged to the state as backing for a loan, however, the *Times* failed to note that they were already in service as collateral for the \$1 billion-plus in notes the city had sold to build the housing.)

What went wrong with the *Times's* coverage of New York's financial agony was in part the inherent complexity of the story, in part the McCarthy, or Body Count, Syndrome (the fact that a statement itself may be the news, true or false), in part a misdefinition of "investigative reporting" as the manual labor of digging out information rather than the mental process of linking facts and events not previously connected. The central difficulty, however, was the insistence, presumably by the city desk, that a financial story controlled by the numbers was really a political story that could be presented in conventional terms of pressure-group interactions. The lesson, I suspect, is that these days nobody should be assigned to the city-hall or statehouse beat who has not mastered the arcana of double-entry book-keeping — and that journalism schools like law schools should require candidates for their degree to cross the *pons asinorum* of a course in accounting. ■

SOURCE GUIDE

AN AID TO FINDING INFORMATION

How to read a budget

by FREDERICK O'REILLY HAYES

Say "city budgets" to most people, and their eyes glaze over. But if you say the fire department in New Orleans costs twice as much per person as it does in San Antonio, where there are 60,000 more people, then perhaps you have some interesting questions to ask about the budgets in the two cities. If you know how to look, budgets need not be an indigestible mass of numbers; they can become at least intelligible.

Looking under the iceberg

The preparers and issuers of budgets have their own way of making their numbers intelligible to the press and to the general public — they talk about their current budgets "compared to last year." The internal process of budget preparation is, in fact, almost totally oriented toward increases and decreases from the previous year's budget, together with the revenue changes they will require. But this approach has obvious limitations.

Usually the increases over the past year account for only 5 to 10 percent of the total budget, and reductions are even smaller as a percentage of the budget. If we — and the budget examiners — only look at these pluses and minuses, we are accepting on faith the other, larger part of the budget: for example, our attention might be directed to a police chief's request for ten additional detectives and a

proposed 5 percent pay increase — but not to the uses of the 900 officers already on duty. Like an iceberg, the largest part of the budget escapes our gaze.

To understand, divide

A year or so ago, I attended a meeting at which a Harvard professor said that the most important analytic tool in public-policy analysis was long division. And long division is perhaps the best way to get at the underwater part of the iceberg. Let me offer an example.

New York City at one time had full-time marching bands in the police, fire, and sanitation departments. The bands were staffed by assigning regular patrolmen, firefighters, and sanitationmen to full-time band duty. Fiscal pressure forced the conversion of the police and fire bands to a voluntary, off-duty basis, but sanitation's band remained. It cost \$600,000 per year. When it was cut from the mayor's budget, the City Council restored the funds; the band had strong supporters and was a small item in an annual budget of \$5 to \$6 billion. We in the budget bureau decided to discuss the band in terms of cost per performance in the next year's budget. The cost, as I remember, was computed at \$2,900 per performance, which was a meaningful figure to councilmen: it clearly indicated to many of them that the band was a luxury item in the budget. It was eliminated.

Unit costs do not explain everything, but they can suggest better questions about the budget.

Unit costs in the schools

School systems, for example, can be examined in terms of unit costs. Here there are a multitude of measures: cost per child enrolled or child in average daily attendance, pupil-teacher ratio, and average class size. The cutbacks in school financing during New York City's fiscal crisis, for example, have

meant fewer teachers in the schools. Press accounts of schools with classes of forty and fifty students have led to protests by parents and students. But the overall teacher-pupil ratio suggests that there is an important unasked question. Even after the reductions, there still are about 50,000 teachers for about one million students: a teacher-pupil ratio of roughly 20 to 1. Why, then, the problem? The answer is that x number of teachers are in non-teaching assignments; y are in special or supplementary teaching assignments without primary class assignments; z represent over-allocations to certain community districts, and so on. This is the kind of question a school system should be able to answer, and the answer cannot help but cast a revealing light on the way that system functions.

How much service is enough?

There's a limit, however, to this kind of analysis. Who among us is likely to know how many policemen per 1,000 population represent an adequate police force for, say, a city of several hundred thousand; or what the cost of refuse collection per household ought to be; or how many mental hospital beds are needed for a given population? Here, the needed yardstick can be provided only by referring to the experience of other state or local governments.

The differences from city to city or state to state in the cost of performing similar services are often astonishing. There are, of course, significant variations in local conditions, but they account for only a part of the cost differences. Large differences in unit costs are usually due in part to variations in efficiency and productivity, as well as to differences in the level of service.

Refuse collection is an excellent example. In some cities, refuse cans are picked up from the backyard or even from the cellar, but most municipalities

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collect at the curb or in the alley. Most American cities provide once-a-week collection, but many collect more often. In many areas of New York City, for example, refuse used to be collected six times weekly. These differences do not make comparisons useless; indeed, they often make them especially helpful because they suggest how much more higher service levels will cost.

At the state level, mental-health programs offer an especially good opportunity for comparisons. With the advent fifteen years ago of effective drug therapy, outpatient care became possible for many mentally ill patients who previously had to be hospitalized. State mental hospital systems could be reduced to a fraction of their former size. But the new therapy also created political problems, because in many cases neither the hospital staffs nor the communities in which they were located wanted to see hospitals closed. It raised managerial questions because of the need for outpatient care in the localities where the patients would live. A state-by-state comparison of the number of hospitalized mentally ill (excluding the mentally retarded) patients per 10,000 population will show striking differences, according to how effectively the states have made use of the new therapies. A high ratio is normally an indication of an unrealized potential for budget reductions.

Easy comparisons

Comparisons are easiest of all for programs financed in whole or in part by the federal government. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare, for example, publishes data for every state welfare program — not simply on budgets, number of cases, and number of persons in the case load, but also on the proportion of ineligible recipients and overpayments revealed by a sample quality-control audit. It is also easy to compare medicaid eligibles per 10,000 population and average expenditures per medicaid eligible.

In local governments, the problem of comparison is often more difficult. It's easy enough to compare police and fire staffing between cities in terms of numbers on the force per 10,000 population.

Problems arise, however, when attempts are made to compare police workloads (because of reservations about any method of police workload comparison), although the National Productivity Commission has published an excellent analysis of the problem of police productivity, including some intercity comparisons of performance. One very useful comparative ratio is the number of arrests, or what are called "better felony arrests" (those that survive the first judicial screening), per man on the force.

As far as fire department budgets are concerned, the number of men per fire company can be compared. The average number of runs per company also provides some insight into the pressure on the force.

Comparing levels of service

Refuse collection and disposal efficiency can be easily compared. Without too much work, it is possible to compare productivity per truck-shift or per man-day, as measured by tons per day collected.

Until a few years ago, Wilmington, Delaware collected with five-man crews, while some western cities used one-man collection trucks. Phoenix, Arizona, Inglewood, California, and a number of other cities using a one-man, manually loaded truck have realized collection productivity of nine to ten tons per day. The three-man crews more common in eastern cities collect nine to fourteen tons per day, or less than half as much per man day.

Pavement and pothole repair crews, catch-basin cleaning crews, sewer and water-main repair crews seem to show similar variations. It is probably safe to say that the smaller crews generally perform as rapidly as larger crews.

How many men on the streets?

Another way to look at budgets is to compare total staff to those involved in direct service to the public. To cover New York's roughly 800 radio patrol sectors, it takes 1,600 patrolmen in two-man cars each shift — only 5 percent of the authorized uniformed force. For three shifts a day, seven days a week, with allowances for sick-leave and vacations, it takes five times as many —

8,000 patrolmen — which is still only 25 percent of the department's peak strength of 32,000. This is something of a surprise to most people and raises questions about the many other uses of police manpower. Let's look at the effect of a proposed increase, say another hundred officers for patrol duty. If all of the new positions are used for patrol, a minimum of 10 percent would be used for sergeants and superior officers. The remaining ninety, if used for uniform round-the-clock coverage, would add only eighteen officers to patrol duty at any one time; if all were placed on the high-crime evening shift, it would increase staffing on that shift by fifty-four officers. Every municipal budget officer and every police chief understands this basic arithmetic, but rarely is the effect of increases detailed in this way for public consumption.

Finding a budget's weak points

The "divide and compare" strategy takes time, effort, and information. But it need not be done comprehensively; a reviewer can pick his spots, concentrating on areas of greatest importance or interest. And it need not be done all at once, since the executive budget is usually before the city council or state legislature for one to three months. Moreover, much is known before an executive budget is even submitted. Most operations will be continued with few changes. Many of the decisions reflected in a budget are made or mandated by changing conditions over the course of a year. Collective bargaining, new federal, state, or local legislation, and changes in economic conditions all lead inevitably to budget changes.

New programs

The merits of any new spending proposals will depend, of course, upon the nature of the programs and current conditions. New proposals are typically vulnerable because the specifics and details will not have been developed or even fully thought through at the time the budget is submitted. One good rule of thumb about the financing of new programs is that delays in start-up and the time required for recruitment are such as to usually reduce financing requirements to about half the amount that would be

required if the program were fully staffed and operating at the intended level at the beginning of the fiscal year. By the same token, it will usually take double the first-year appropriation to continue the program at its end-of-year rate during the second fiscal year. First-year requirements are almost always overestimated.

Phony welfare cuts

There are also programs in the budget where expenditures cannot be controlled because they are determined by external factors. Examples include the demand-based, open-ended programs: welfare and medicaid are the most obvious examples. The number of persons receiving welfare and medicaid assistance depends upon the number of eligibles who apply and the rate of closings as persons now on the rolls become self-supporting or die. A prudent budget will tend toward estimates on the high side for welfare and similar programs to make

sure that funds will not be exhausted before the end of the year. On the other hand, an optimistically low welfare estimate by a governor or a mayor (without changes in eligibility standards), or a cut by the state legislature or the local legislative body in the welfare budget, increases the risk of deficit. More often than not, such a cut in welfare or any other uncontrollable program is a phony reduction and worth looking into.

Where the money comes from

Revenue estimates also should be examined. Real property taxation, the mainstay of local government, is reasonably straightforward. Usually the tax is applied to an already published tax roll and the only unknown is the level of tax delinquency. Estimated revenues from other taxes are harder to evaluate. To estimate the increased income from most of the major taxes — sales, personal income, business income — the rate of inflation is a good yardstick.

Sales-tax proceeds, without changes in rate, will tend to increase at about the rate of price inflation or a little less. Sales-tax proceeds may exceed the rate of inflation if the community or the state is growing in population. Personal and business income taxes may increase by one-and-a-half to two times the inflation rate and more with high local prosperity — but are very vulnerable to economic downturns. In all state and local taxes, it is good to compare the percentage increases projected in the budget with the increases actually realized in past years.

One important problem in revenue financing is the extent to which one-time sources of funds are used to finance the budget. Such a one-time source could be a large cash balance from a prior year, or surpluses from some expired account, or a windfall receipt of federal funds. There will be a problem in the subsequent budget when such funds must be replaced with other sources of revenue.

continued

SOURCES

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

726 Jackson Pl. NW, Washington, D.C. 20575. ACIR has published numerous analyses of state and local financial trends, problems, and issues.

Census of Governments

Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Provides comparable data for various categories of expenditures and revenues for state and larger local governments. County data for all local governments are especially valuable because the census consolidates data on overlapping jurisdictions, a bugaboo of intergovernmental comparison. Data are always a little out-of-date, but provide a good basis for initial comparison.

Council of State Governments

Iron Works Pike, Lexington, Ky. 40505. Issues numerous useful publications on state governments, including the *Book of the States*.

Council on Municipal Performance

84 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011. This private, nonprofit organization analyzes and issues reports on differences in underlying conditions among cities and on

the performance of various municipal agencies.

Labor Management Relations Service

1620 I St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Funded by the National League of Cities and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the service provides material on labor-management relations, although it has come to concentrate on productivity-related studies.

Municipal Year Book

International City Management Association, 1140 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Published annually, this work always includes some significant intermunicipal comparisons. The year book also includes an extensive listing of sources in its bibliography.

National Association of Counties

1735 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006. This organization provides extensive data on county governments.

National Center for Educational Statistics

400 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20002. NCES publishes a number of statistical reports on state and local school systems, including data on enrollment, number of teachers, expenditures, and teachers' salaries.

National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality

2000 M St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. The commission has issued a number of publications concerned with measurement of productivity in local services such as police, fire, and sanitation, plus some case histories on productivity improvement.

National Training and Development Service for State and Local Governments

5028 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20016. Responsible for collecting and then publishing research and development in the federal government that affects cities and states.

Public Technology Incorporated

1140 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Public Technology identifies technological needs in local governments and develops and disseminates solutions.

Urban Institute

2100 M St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. The institute has an impressive list of publications on local government programs and finance. In the last several years, there has been a strong concentration on measures of program quality and effectiveness.

New York City's fiscal problems have raised a more general concern about the financing of state and municipal budgets. New York in fact is unique in many respects and has been permitted far more financial flexibility than most state and local governments. Close attention should be paid to the budgets of governments that seem to have difficulty finding funds to cover budget increases — simply because necessity is likely to be the mother of invention. The pressure encourages manipulation to "find" income and to put off expenditures. There is a host of possible "solutions": expenditure rollovers into the next fiscal year; deferral of pension-fund payments; financing through inter-fund

transfers; capital financing for nondurables; increasing use of short-term borrowing; or advancing tax payment dates.

Cautionary notes

Evaluating budgets by the divide-and-compare method is a highly useful process — but it cannot by itself provide a complete evaluation of governmental performance. Here are a few other points to remember:

□ The output of a government program has two dimensions: quantity and quality. We have said little about the quality of government services, although it obviously has much to do with whether the public is getting its money's worth.

There are ways to measure the quality of programs but, in most cases, it is very difficult to make comparative judgments. Both the Urban Institute and the National Commission on Productivity and Work Quality have prepared guides on how to improve evaluations of quality and effectiveness in various services. □ This discussion has emphasized services provided to everyone who needs them. The government also provides services that cover only a part of the need: pre-school, day care, sometimes kindergarten, education for handicapped children, services for the aged, family planning, and community mental health are typical examples. There is some value in measuring the proportion of the total population in need that is actually being served. This is especially true since these programs tend to be strongly expansionary, for obvious reasons.

□ Business-type and user-financed programs, e.g., water, gas, electricity, and dumping at landfills, also pose some special problems. The basic question is whether fees and charges actually cover the cost of providing the service. This is an easy question to answer if the budget provides separate statements of cost and revenue, but a difficult one where integrated statements are not provided.

□ Federal aid for both state and local governments, and state aid for local government, are major elements in financing. But aid programs vary greatly. The largest federal aid is for public assistance and Medicaid; here federal aid rises in proportion to state and local spending. The mushrooming federal aid provides no fiscal relief and, indeed, merely parallels the rising burden on the states and cities. At the other extreme, general revenue sharing provides "free" money available to help finance almost any program. Most other federal grants are inducements, enabling state and local governments to undertake new activities or projects at a discount price or sometimes "for free" if no matching is required.

Unlike federal aid, most state aid (except for public assistance) is intended to reduce local financial burdens rather than to stimulate expanded activity in particular programs. The largest state grants are for public schools. ■

COMPARING BUDGETS

Following is a list of suggested cost units and service ratios:

Police

Expenditures per capita in population
Employees per 10,000 population
Uniformed officers per 10,000 population
Uniformed officers per radio call
Uniformed officers per 1000 reported index crimes
Uniformed officers per 1000 arrests

Fire

Expenditures per capita
Employees per 10,000 population
Uniformed force per 10,000 population
Alarms per member uniformed force
Fires per member uniformed force
Medical emergencies per member uniformed force

Sanitation

Expenditures per capita in population
Employees per 10,000 population
Expenditures per household

Refuse Collection

Expenditures per household
Tons collected per man-day
Households served per man-day
Percent missed collections

Refuse Disposal

Expenditures per ton: incinerator; land fill; other. Average of the three

Street Cleaning

Cost per lane-mile

Streets and Highways

Maintenance and repair costs per

lane-mile of paved street or highway
Repaving costs per lane-mile (or per square yard)

University

Full time equivalent students per 10,000 population
Cost per student
Student-faculty ratio

Mental Hospitals

Beds per 10,000 population
Average patients per 10,000 population
Occupancy ratio
Cost per patient year

Prisons

Average number of prisoners per 10,000 population
Cost per prisoner year

Medicaid

Persons covered per 10,000 population
Cost per person
Medicaid nursing-home patients per 10,000 population over sixty-five
Cost per nursing home population

Public Assistance

Persons in case load per 10,000 population
Aid for dependent children per 10,000 population
Home relief per 10,000 population
Cost per person in case load
Percentage ineligible on last quality audit
Percent overpayments on last quality audit

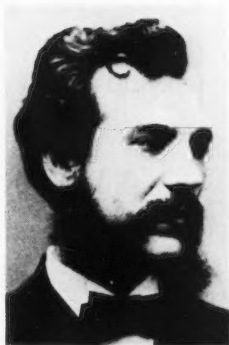
Hospitals

Cost per patient day
Occupancy rate
Average length of stay

One of a series of reports on the first hundred years of the telephone.

The Bell System didn't just happen. It was planned, right from the start.

Thanks to Alexander Graham Bell, all nations have telephones. Thanks to Theodore Newton Vail, the United States has the world's best telephone system.



Alexander Graham Bell

Theodore Newton Vail was the first General Manager of the Bell Telephone Company. He was hired in 1878, when the telephone was two years old, and 10,755 sets were in service, most of them in the Northeast. His vision of what the new invention could become equaled Bell's own.

Both men saw that the success of the infant telephone industry depended on offering customers an integrated nationwide telephone system. The goal, as Vail later phrased it, was "one policy, one system, universal service." "The strength of the Bell System," he wrote, "lies in this universality."

Vail's economic insight was remarkable for his day. He was managing a new kind of enterprise, one of the first of what we now call technological industries. He saw that technology gave birth to the telephone, and that technology also imposed new requirements on the managers of the business. Manufacturing telephones required a large commitment



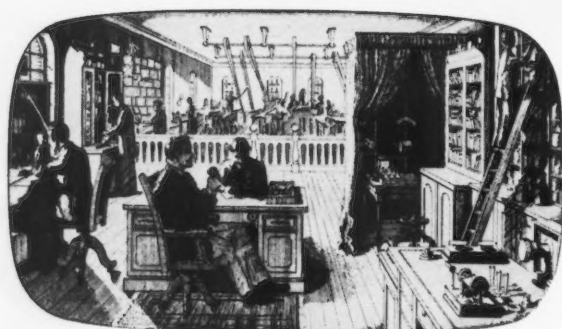
Theodore Newton Vail

of capital, for specialized factories. Improving the telephone required coordination of research efforts, plus more capital for laboratories. Marketing the telephone successfully required reasonable assurance that supply and demand would keep pace with each other. Vail realized that the only way those requirements could be met was for management to plan every step of the enterprise, from sources of supply to customer orders.

Contrast the case of the manager of a simpler business—a small bakery, for instance. The manager has great freedom. If cake doesn't sell, he can bake bread. If white bread doesn't sell, he can bake rye. There is no need to commit large sums of capital, since the same ovens serve for all three products. No research effort is required, since the recipes are well known. If the price of flour goes up, the manager can raise the price of bread immediately. If demand varies, he can bake more bread or



Vail's ability to plan turned Bell's invention into the best telephone system in the world.



*The predecessor of Bell Telephone Laboratories:
the Bell company's Mechanical Department in the 1880's.*

less. The technological industry, by its very nature, lacks such flexibility.

The first telephones were made in a Boston machine shop. Demand soon outstripped capacity, and firms in several cities were licensed to make sets under the Bell patents. Vail wanted closer integration of manufacture, to assure the company's service objectives. In 1881, the Bell company acquired controlling interest in the Western Electric Company of Chicago, and in 1882, made that company the manufacturer of Bell equipment.

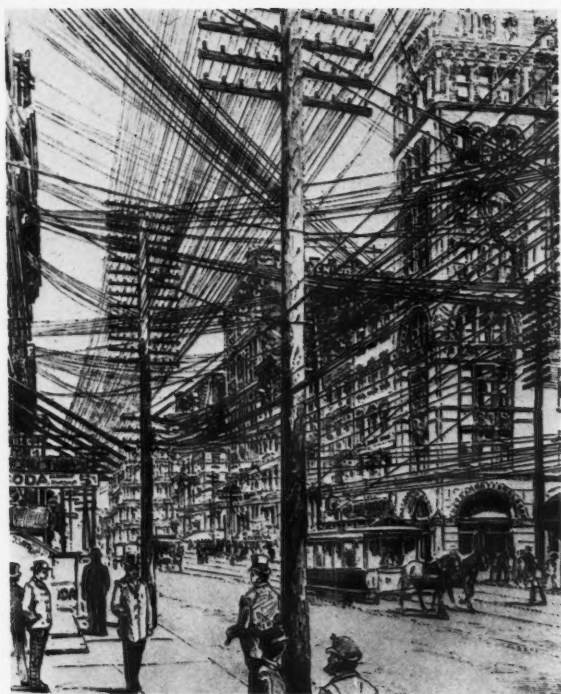
This arrangement was desirable for a number of technical reasons: quality, reliability, standardization. Vail also had a strong managerial reason. The Bell company's business was providing telephone service. Success depended on having a dependable supply of quality equipment needed for the service, at a reasonable cost. By integrating manufacturing within the Bell company, Vail took a long step toward that goal.

At this point the groundwork was laid for a nationwide network. In 1884 the first Boston to New York line proved that commercial long distance telephony was possible—and profitable. Vail and his associates organized an additional com-

pany, whose corporate charter put Vail's dream in black and white. Its business was to be "constructing, buying, owning, leasing or otherwise obtaining, lines...and equipment, using, operating or otherwise maintaining, the same....The lines of this association...will connect one or more points in each and every city, town or place, in...the United States, Canada and Mexico, and also by cable and other appropriate means with the rest of the known world...."

Despite all the progress made, Vail saw a basic threat to the industry. Although it was growing, the quality of the service it provided was deteriorating. Some of the earliest equipment needed to be replaced. Rapid expansion was causing growing pains. Vail knew these service problems must be dealt with. But the Boston financiers who determined company policy felt their primary duty was to maximize profit for investors. The financiers represented the thinking of the day; once again Vail's ideas were decades ahead of his time. In 1887, Vail felt compelled to resign. For the next twenty years, he followed telephone developments as an interested outsider.

In 1893 and 1894, the Bell telephone patents expired. New telephone companies sprang up almost overnight, many of them in cities already served by Bell companies. Since the wires of the new companies did not connect with Bell wires, their subscribers could not talk with Bell subscribers. In order to be in touch with all the telephones in town, stores and offices had to have two telephones. That meant two directories, two sets of wires—and two bills. Nevertheless, demand for all telephones was soaring.



*Broadway and John Street, New York City, 1890.
Vail succeeded in getting the city's wires put underground.*

The new companies grew, the Bell affiliated companies grew, the confusion grew.

Growth brought financial problems. Earnings, handsome as they were, were insufficient to finance such rapid expansion. (The telephone industry is a capital intensive industry.) Bell management borrowed more and more money from big banks. By 1907, lenders were getting hard to find. Then came the Panic of 1907. To protect their interests, the bankers demanded that telephone management invite Vail back to run things. Vail accepted the invitation. That year there were 3,132,000 Bell telephones in service.

Vail's return to command restored the financial community's confidence in the Bell company, so towering was the reputation he had built. Improving the quality of the service was his first concern. He made sure that concern was understood by Bell people throughout the land. Thanks to

their efforts, and investment in needed equipment, service improved.

Further improvement depended on improving telephone technology. Research was going on in various parts of the company, in various cities. To encourage better planning and coordination, Vail unified the research effort. And he directed the researchers to examine at once a new device, the audion tube invented by Dr. Lee De Forest. Working with De Forest, telephone researchers developed the vacuum tube electronic amplifier, which greatly extended the range of long distance service, and led in time to commercial radio and television.

Duplicate telephone companies in various towns were incompatible with good service. Waterworks and electric companies were recognized as "public utilities," granted exclusive franchises for geographical areas. Vail believed that same reasoning applied to the telephone industry. He set out to eliminate the duplication by buying out the rival companies where that was possible, or selling out to them in some towns if that was the only way. In 1913, as a step toward universal service, he agreed to allow the independent (non-Bell) companies to use the Bell long distance lines.

Now Vail could speak confidently of a *telephone system* rather than a large number of isolated, unconnected telephone companies. He was the first to use the phrase "Bell System." He could look to the day when telephone service would be well within the means of the average American. And that gave him the final element in his planning: he could make long-range estimates of the needs of his customers.

The chain was complete: research and development, an efficient source of supply in the Western Electric Company and total responsibility for installation, maintenance and repair in the local companies.

Because Vail could plan in this way, the company could invest the necessary millions in equipment for current needs, and in research for predictable future growth.

The Bell System continues today in the pattern Vail set. Not as a matter of tradition, but because the concept works. We are planning today American telephone service for the 21st Century. Western Electric and the associated Bell Companies are installing new electronic switching systems nationwide, which make possible many additional telephone services. Scientists and engineers at Bell Laboratories, birthplace of the first electrical digital computer and the transistor, are working now on new technology to transmit telephone calls on a beam of light, to handle calling volumes expected by the year 2000.

Research, manufacturing, operations—one Bell System, a planned approach that works. Efficiency and productivity are well ahead of the average for all other



Electronic switching systems, a thousand times faster than the equipment they replace, are now being installed across the nation.

industries, the system is the best in the world. There are two tests you can make yourself to see if the Bell System really works: Compare telephone prices to the price of almost anything else over the past twenty-five years. Long distance service is one of the few things that have hardly gone up at all. Other telephone services have gone up far less than the price of almost anything else you buy. The economics of a planned telephone system have surely been to the customer's benefit. What about the service? Well, just pick up your telephone. Call any number in the United States.

The best telephone system in the world didn't just happen. It was planned that way.

One Bell System. It works.



Bell System

READER'S FORUM

The IRS vs. civil rights workers: a story in search of a by-line

Was it news?
And was a free-lancer
the right author?

by JASON BERRY

Editors' note: When the Review received the account below, we were struck by the fact that an interesting news story did not surface for several weeks because there was disagreement between a free-lance author and several news organizations he contacted. His story and the reply that follows explain the disagreement, and they highlight unfortunate obstacles to the flow of news.

Late last spring I was working on a political article for *The Nation*, a long piece on Fayette, Mississippi mayor Charles Evers, his income-tax-evasion case, and the political climate in Mississippi in light of his approaching trial. In 1971 I worked in Mississippi as Evers' press secretary when he ran for governor, and I wrote a book about that experience. By April 20 of last year I had concluded half of the interviews and done about as much of the research for the *Nation* article when, quite accidentally, I came upon some intriguing information. I was talking with a prominent black leader about Evers' income-tax-evasion case (which was to end in mistrial June 12). The man remarked, rather offhandedly, "Well, the IRS got Charles indicted but they've

been after plenty of us in Mississippi. I was audited last year and the year before that and the year before that." He then told me of two other men, also allies of Evers, who had been audited in 1974.

With his permission, I called the other two and they confirmed what he had said, and gave me two names *each* of others whose tax records had been examined by federal agents in Mississippi. By the end of the afternoon, I had a list of seven black civil-rights figures who had been audited since the first investigation of Evers began in 1972.

I spent three days making phone calls and by April 25 I had a list of sixteen names. I abandoned work on the *Nation* article to devote full energies to the investigative work at hand. (As the assignment had been on speculation, editor Carey McWilliams was gracious in response to my letter backing off.)

I was very quickly running out of money now, and contacted two Mississippi newspaper editors: Hodding Carter III of Greenville's *Delta Democrat-Times* and A. B. Albritton of Biloxi's *South Mississippi Sun*. Carter's paper is probably the best known in Mississippi, and a traditional starting point for young reporters who, after a year or so, move on to bigger jobs. Albritton, a former *Memphis Commercial Appeal* bureau correspondent in Jackson, was, at twenty-nine, already running an aggressive and respected morning paper. He was a *Time* stringer in Mississippi.

I rattled off the list of names to Carter, and, after cursing the IRS, he said, "Our newspaper was audited nearly every year from 1954, when Dad endorsed the Supreme Court desegregation decision, until 1972 when he died. We never could prove anything, but we assumed it was harassment."

Carter and Albritton agreed to run my story, breaking it together in their respective papers as soon as it was written. They each gave me \$100 to help de-

fray expenses for what now appeared to be another seven to ten days' work. At Carter's suggestion, I applied for, and received, a small grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism.

My investigation showed that since the IRS criminal investigation of Evers began in 1972, his former campaign manager, Ed Cole, had been twice audited; Gil Jonas, the New York director of the Medgar Evers Fund, a foundation that serves the town of Fayette, had been audited three times. (Jonas said, "It cost me \$700 or \$800 to have a Manhattan CPA prepare my returns for the audit, all to prove to the government that I did nothing wrong.") Mel Leventhal, now with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York, lived in Mississippi for nearly a decade and was responsible for the legal work leading up to many of the desegregation decisions. He was fighting his second audit, begun in Mississippi and continued in New York. He had filed a joint return with his wife, the black novelist Alice Walker, now a *Ms.* editor. Dr. Paul DeRian, a liberal surgeon in Jackson, was twice audited; his wife, Patricia, was vice-chairman of the Democratic Party Rules Committee and a vice-president of the Southern Regional Council, the Atlanta foundation. Robert Clark, the first black in the Mississippi legislature, had been audited the first three years after his 1968 election; Sarah Johnson, the first black on the Greenville city council, had been audited two years running. The state ACLU president was also on the list, as were secretaries at offices of civil-rights agencies.

In all, the list came to twenty-seven people, most of them audited in 1973 and 1974. The statistical probability of such a pattern of legitimate audits appeared virtually nil. The Associated Press, drawing on an interview with a Boston IRS official, had recently reported a less than 2 percent chance that

Jason Berry is the author of Amazing Grace: With Charles Evers in Mississippi.

the average taxpayer would be audited in a calendar year. The prestigious *Federal Tax Guide Reports* in 1974 said about one in every fifty-seven Americans is likely to be audited.

In the twenty-seven Mississippi cases, none of the audits suggested serious misconduct and all twenty-seven people were involved in civil-rights work.

Carter, Albritton, and I decided that for the story to receive maximum exposure, it should break in a national publication and in their papers on the same day. This would give the story mileage both in Mississippi and Washington-New York. Presumably the wire services, and maybe the networks, would pick up on it.

Now the question was which publication to send it to. *Time* and *Newsweek* were ruled out because of their space limitations — and we wanted the story to move quickly. *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times* were the best places. Albritton recommended the *Los Angeles Times*, since their reporter, Jack Nelson, had covered the civil-rights movement in the 1960s, and still maintained an ongoing interest in the South.

The New York Times had several Southern bureau reporters; *The Washington Post* had none. I thought a dramatic article involving the IRS and black Mississippi leaders, breaking in Washington, would be a scoop for the *Post*. I knew that my name was not well enough known for me to call the *Post* and say, "This is Jason Berry with a great piece on Mississippi." Like other professions, journalism demands a certain diplomacy. Hodding Carter's father is a legend in American journalism, and he himself is a well known journalist and politician; so I asked if he would call the *Post* first.

It was by now the first week in May. I sat in Hodding's office in Greenville while he called the *Post* national desk. A lackey reporter took a message and made him spell his name and repeat the essential facts of the story twice.

Four days later Carter told me to call Hedley Burrell, an editor on the national affairs desk. Two days later, after several attempts, I reached him. He was a vague-sounding man whose accent sug-

gested that he had done time at one of the better eating clubs of Harvard. I explained my background and assured him that the current work was investigative and had little connection with my feelings about Evers. After I explained the facts of the story, Burrell said, "What does this have to do with Charles Evers? Hasn't he been convicted?"

I was surprised that a national editor

'The South simply is no longer important to the large news organizations'

should be so ill-informed about one of America's most famous black leaders. "No," I said. "He's been indicted. His trial begins in three weeks."

Burrell then said abruptly, "I have to go to a meeting. Call me back this afternoon."

I returned the call in the afternoon. Burrell said the *Post* was interested in the article, and would like to see it. I asked him about money. "We usually pay \$100 to \$150 for really top-notch stringer reports. We might go as high as \$200 if we like this."

I explained that even with the grant and contributions from the Mississippi papers, I had taken almost three weeks now away from free-lance work and had no income to show for the article. He said the *Post* might pay an extra \$50 for expenses.

I wrote the article in Greenville, leaving a copy with Carter, sent one to Albritton in Biloxi, and mailed the original to the *Post* on May 14.

I called the *Post* on May 16 (all calls were collect), and was told by one of Burrell's assistants that the article had arrived but that he had not read it. The *Mayaguez* affair was occupying much of the news space at the time, and so I said I would phone back the next day. I called on the 17th, a Saturday, and after hassling with another editor, finally spoke to Burrell, who told me he had not read the article yet.

"You've had it two days now. When are you going to read it?"

"I'll get to it on Monday or Tuesday," he said.

"Look, this is a major piece of information. Two papers in Mississippi are sitting on it, want to break it concurrently with the *Post*."

"That's of no concern to me."

I returned to New Orleans again, figuring that by midweek I would go back to Mississippi and look into other areas where the IRS may have gone after people not on my list. On Monday Burrell did not call, so I called in the afternoon. The assistant said he would give him the message. On Tuesday he did not call, and Carter and Albritton were now anxious to publish the story, and like me, miffed about the way the *Post* had delayed. Finally Burrell called on Wednesday, a full week after I'd sent the story.

"We're willing to pay you for the tip," he told me, but said that the *Post* wanted to put a staffer on it. I asked him what was wrong with the article as written. (Carter and Albritton had both assured me it was an excellent story.) Burrell reported that they would pay for the "tip." "You mean, the information?" I said. "That's right," he said, adding that I would not get a by-line. I flatly refused his offer.

Carter, Albritton, and I resumed our discussion via long distance telephone. The *Post*'s decision was a profound disappointment to me, but Carter suggested that I go ahead and contact *The New York Times*. All of us knew Roy Reed, the correspondent who lives in New Orleans; we felt he would naturally be interested in the story.

I found out that Reed was in Arkansas. I reached him that night, told him about my story and also what had happened with the *Post*. He said to call Bill Kovach, the Washington news editor at the *Times* bureau. He added that he (Reed) would call Kovach before I did. I called Kovach and gave him a few facts. He said to send him the story.

I got the story in the mail, with a few revisions (I added courtesy titles so it would read as *Times* articles are supposed to), but the Memorial Day weekend mail was slow, and Kovach

didn't get the piece until Tuesday, May 27. In my cover letter I explained that I was interested in three things: that the story break in Mississippi and New York the same day, that I get decent remuneration (I was thinking of \$250) for my work, and that I get a by-line.

Kovach, who was most forthright in his dealings with me, explained that the *Times* does not accept free-lance news stories. He said he thought the money would be no problem, but he asked whether I was willing to have Roy Reed or another reporter write an article, quoting from my work (thus giving me some credit), and drawing on the facts I had assembled. What impressed me about Kovach, although I disagreed intensely with the *Times* policy, is that he refused to read the story himself because, in his own words, "If I see you have something, I'm going to jump on it myself. I want to be fair to you." He was fair, and I respect him for it, and so the *Times* was out. I wanted full credit for my work.

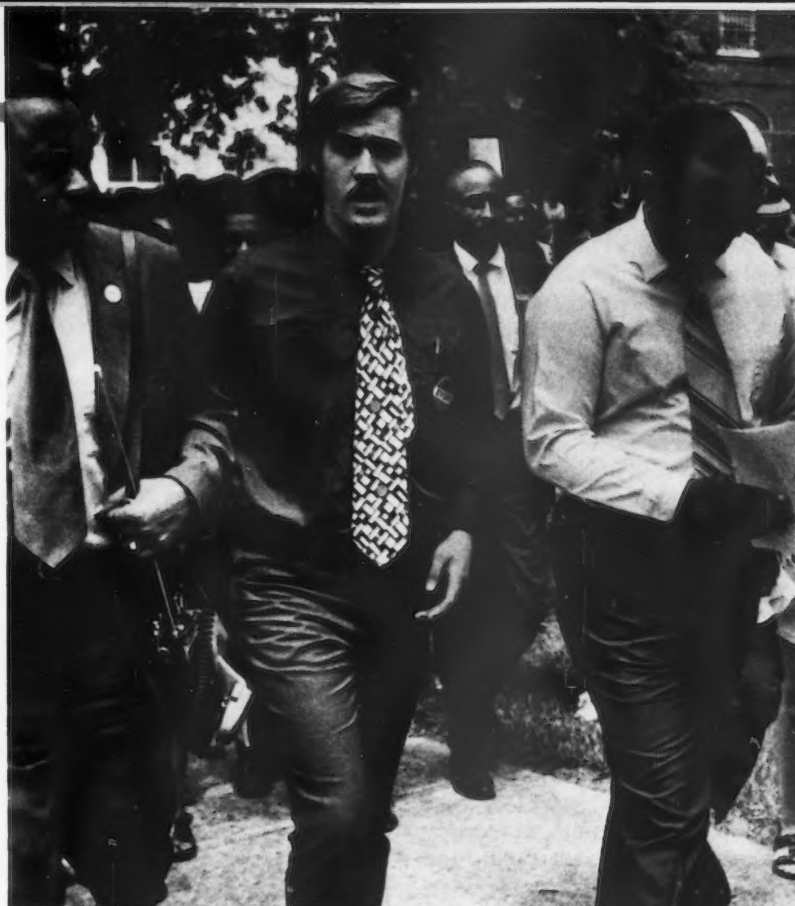
Carter was in New York when I struck out at the *Times* and so I called Albritton in Biloxi. Albritton was fuming about the *Times* and *Post*. "They don't shame me," he said. "Not one bit. This is ridiculous!"

He then called the *Los Angeles Times*, but found that his friend Jack Nelson was on vacation. He called back with good news, however. Although the news department had the same no-free-lance by-line policy as *The New York Times*, a Washington editor had put him in touch with an editor of the op-ed page in Los Angeles, Don Bremner. Albritton explained the problem, and asked Bremner to call me.

Bremner and I discussed the story and he said he hoped it would run on the op-ed page. He then turned on a recording device, and I read the entire story, all 2,000 words, to the recorder from my apartment in New Orleans.

Bremner called back the next day and said it was a great story but it was too much a news article and simply couldn't run as an opinion piece. He was very cordial, but he rejected the piece.

By now I felt the gods had abandoned me. Reluctantly, I called Jim Bell, the Atlanta bureau chief of *Time*, told him



John Messina

Author Jason Berry (center) campaigning with Charles Evers (right) in Mississippi

roughly what the story entailed. He said he wasn't sure what *Time* would do with it, if anything at all. *Time* didn't cover the South as it once had. Unless it got huge play in the "Nation" section, it would be only a small item; I probably wouldn't get credit. Bell graciously suggested that I contact James Polk, a former *Washington Star* reporter who had won the Pulitzer Prize last year for investigative work, and now was a special correspondent for NBC.

I had never considered going to the networks, probably because I hate television. But I had no choice other than to call Polk; I wanted the story to break nationally. The Mississippi papers had sat on it for nearly three weeks. Evers' trial was ten days off, and I thought the information should break before then, if for no other reason than because the story was by now overdue. I called Polk on May 29; he wasn't in. I left a message with his secretary, telling her a few basic things, enough for her to impart to him a seductive news lead.

Polk returned my call shortly, and

gave verbal assurance that he would not act on the story without a prior agreement with me. I explained the facts, and he offered \$500, pending approval by his producer.

I was extremely pleased, at first, with the money, but after he rang off I began to think about the many places the article had gone before what now appeared to be the ultimate acceptance. Although the NBC offer was twice what I had been offered by any papers, I was disappointed that the article would not reach a national audience under my by-line.

Polk called back to say the deal was on, but expressed concern that the *Post*, the only outlet to read the information and not actually say they wouldn't act on it, might jump on the story now that nearly three weeks had passed since the original submission to Hedley Burrell. I called Burrell and he assured me that the *Post* would not break the story.

The most discouraging development with NBC was that Polk could not arrange his schedule to accommodate a Mississippi trip until June 10, one day

after Evers' trial was to begin. I felt the IRS story would have greater impact before the trial began since Evers had been first investigated in 1972. I had reliable information to the effect that, although Charles Evers had not been indicted until August of 1974, the IRS criminal investigation of him had been completed in late 1973. Most of the twenty-seven others were audited in 1973 and 1974, after that. Although a news report could not actually say that the later audits had been the result of the investigation of Evers, the implication, which seemed striking to me, could be stated.

Polk didn't buy that theory, which was his decision to make. He arrived on June 10, filmed in Jackson, and he and his film crew hustled through the Delta on the 11th completing the report. I read the script at breakfast on the 10th, and though its tone was not as strong as I would have liked, I thought it a good representation of the facts. (My only complaint was that he did not consider Jonas and Leventhal, who were New Yorkers, to be part of the story, because they did not reside in Mississippi. Because their activities were directly related to those of the others audited, I disagreed. Polk's report discussed twenty-two audits; besides Jonas and Leventhal, he cut out three others who had been audited prior to 1972, and concentrated on twenty-two figures audited in the last two-year period.) I was pleased that Polk mentioned at the end of his script that I had been responsible for uncovering the information. It looked as though I at least would get some credit for the investigative work I had done.

The Evers case ended in mistrial, quite abruptly, on June 12. A government witness inadvertently suggested Evers may have tapped funds from a 1968 congressional campaign. This intimation was out of the scope of the government's charges; the Justice attorneys had specifically disavowed campaigns as likely sources for the increase in net worth.

(Evers contended that he had \$160,000 in cash when he returned to Mississippi from the Chicago underworld in 1963 to take up his martyred brother's work in the civil-rights move-

ment. That money was invested in legal businesses between 1968 and 1970; the statute of limitations had run out when Evers revealed his past in the confessional autobiography *Evers*. Ever's defense showed the government had little knowledge, other than basic facts in the book, of Evers' assets prior to 1968. The agent who put together the criminal investigation got most of his leads from Evers himself, who turned over all his records to the IRS, knowing full well that the government could have been required to stipulate which records it wanted. The agent testified that he had not investigated Evers' activities in Chicago.)

I called Polk on the afternoon of June 12 to apprise him of the trial's conclusion. He thanked me, said he would put the information into his filmed report, which he said was scheduled for the next night, June 13, on the Chancellor broadcast.

Thus, the story broke in the morning edition of the *South Mississippi Sun* on June 13, in the afternoon *Delta Democrat-Times*, and on *The NBC Nightly News* that evening. Polk's report ran just over three minutes. He did not mention my name after all. Politics, I guess, is politics.

In spite of wire-service coverage, newspapers around the country paid almost no attention to the story. The UPI in Jackson was given the story for late release the night of June 12, so that papers across the country could go with it Friday evening and Saturday morning. Albritton told me that the UPI story was fairly long; the AP story led with the IRS's rebuttals that a computer objectively selects returns for audit, but the *Times* and *Post* easily could have picked up on it.

Two days earlier, on the afternoon of June 11, B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., a *Times* correspondent in Mississippi to cover Evers' trial, had told me that Mrs. Derian, the committeewoman of Evers' Loyalist Democrats and one of the twenty-seven who had been audited, had told him about my story. "I heard the *Post* gave you the spike on it," he said. I told him in brief what had happened, and said that NBC would be

breaking it on the 13th, together with the two state papers. He nodded and said, "It sounds like a good story, but you can't prove harassment." I tried to explain the sheer scope of the audits was dramatic in itself as a news item but he wasn't impressed.

The story died quickly. Had more newspapers and broadcasters carried it, perhaps more would have been learned of the reason for the audits. And perhaps black people in civil-rights work in Mississippi would have had one less political obstacle to contend with in a state that remains institutionally discriminatory in its dealings with blacks and poor whites.

I believe that two factors contributed to the article's demise. First, my attempts to break the story myself. Had I accepted the *Post*'s initial offer I would have received no credit, probably \$200, and the satisfaction of knowing a newspaper corporation was interested in promoting itself at my expense. Still, had they put a good reporter on it, an important story might have resulted. By going to other places, however, I believe I influenced the *Post*'s decision to keep hands off when the story appeared. Similar attitudes prevailed at *The New York Times* and I would guess at the *Los Angeles Times*, too. It's a sick and stupid attitude: if we don't break it, it's not news. A major news network broke it and it still wasn't news to the *Times* and the *Post*.

The second factor is the incredible myopia which plagues the large news organizations in this country about events in the South. The South simply is no longer important to them. You know the story: the great battles were fought, and now it's all over. No more blood, no more burning churches, no more civil-rights workers murdered and buried in earthen dams. Thus, the fact that over a score of men and women passionately committed to human rights were systematically audited by the IRS is not important enough to warrant wide coverage. Had it happened in Alabama, where the governor has become "respectable" thanks to the slovenly media that are only now beginning to examine his record as governor, it might have been a big story.

Harry M. Rosenfeld replies:

Berry's complaint is an exercise in self-justification that does not deal with the only question that ever was of concern to us: the soundness of the story.

Berry's complaint is not reflective of whether or not there is sufficient access by free-lancers or other outsiders to the media, at least as far as *The Washington Post* is concerned. We do take contributions from outsiders for news sections. Almost all the contributors work for other news organizations.

The trouble with Berry's story was twofold: the quality of the story and the qualifications of the reporter.

As it came to us, the story made assertions insufficiently backed up. It showed little reporting beyond the cataloguing of the alleged victims' complaints. The input of the Internal Revenue Service was meager and formal, nor had the IRS headquarters in Washington been approached for comment. There was no apparent attempt to discover whether other groups were also being harassed.

It was essential to plug those and other holes with additional reporting and elaboration. And here the second consideration came into play. Berry did not have much, if any, experience as a reporter. But he had worked for Charles Evers and by Berry's own account remains a partisan of the man and his cause, and of the persons who were the subject of the story.

That is not to say that any person who once worked for a political figure is disqualified from writing for us. But it does mean that we must make sure that we will be publishing a fair, accurate, and balanced story.

The personal impression Berry made over the phone contributed to our feeling that we had to make doubly sure of his material. He spoke very agitatedly and he tried to pressure us into a hasty decision to print by saying that two other papers were ready to publish. It was in this context that our editor, Hed-

ley Burrell, told Berry that he was unconcerned about what other papers might do; we would make our decision by our own lights. That is not the way Berry relates the same incident.

Although we had important reservations about the incompleteness of the story and the possible personal bias of the writer, we wanted to pursue it with an experienced reporter from our own staff. Therefore, we offered to pay Berry for his information and to give him credit in any story we might write.

Berry was not interested, and took his story elsewhere.

There are parts of Berry's *Review* article that give us additional insight into his accuracy and his reliability as a reporter. For example, there is the unnamed *Washington Post* reporter who is said to have made Hodding Carter repeat essential facts of the story and who also made Carter spell his name. This reporter might be described as careful, or professional, or perhaps even as not very bright. But Berry's description of him as a "lackey" simply does not fit the facts detailed by Berry himself.

For another example, Berry describes Burrell as "a vague-sounding man whose accent suggests that he had done time at one of the better eating clubs at Harvard." Unfortunately for Berry's ear — and his judgment — Burrell comes from a working-class family in England and attended a technical college there. (Incidentally, Harvard has no eating clubs; Princeton does.)

That passage raises the question of the value of making judgments on the basis of the sound of someone's voice over the telephone. It is not the mark of a good reporter or even of a mildly competent one.

Moreover, Burrell has quite a different recollection of his conversation with Berry about Evers' legal status. Berry's account attempts to show that an editor was ignorant about an important story. Burrell says he asked simply what Evers' legal status was, not a surprising question from an editor absorbed in the heavy workload of putting out a daily paper. Professional reporters would not object to such questions.

Berry's amateurism is again shown

by his anger over the time it took for the *Post* to respond to him. He said it took a week. If true, it may be close to a speed record for us and, I know, for many, many other publications as well. Berry's reaction shows that he lacks experience in dealing with newspapers.

It could be that Berry had other reasons to be upset by what he thought was undue delay. He obviously wanted the article to appear in the *Post* and in two other newspapers before the Evers trial began, which might not have been as compelling a motive for others not as personally involved as he was.

In asking me to respond, Bob Smith, your managing editor, said: "We think Berry's piece does indeed raise questions about 'bottlenecks' in the system of news gathering and publishing, as well as more conventional, but equally serious, questions of non-partisanship and the difference between an employee and a free-lancer." I disagree that the issue of a bottleneck is raised here. I think bottlenecks might be worth discussing, but Berry's experience with us is not an example of one.

I wonder what the *Review* would be printing today had we a record of accepting the incomplete work of non-professionals who had a personal cause or connection and rushing into print with it?

As a matter of fact, the *Post* does provide access to free-lancers, stringers, and persons from other disciplines. As I said earlier, the news side accepts contributions from stringers. Our Sunday "Outlook" section regularly accepts outside contributions, as does our editorial page, our weekly *Potomac* magazine, and other parts of the paper.

The fact that Berry's article was not used in the form presented to us and under the conditions specified shows merely that we hold to standards Berry did not wish to, or was unable to meet.

Far from being a bottleneck, our editors made repeated attempts to work the story into shape so that we could use it. But Berry was interested in something else. He had every right to hold to his own desires. But he is very wrong if he thinks that we were obliged to readjust our professional standards to his personal performance. ■

Harry M. Rosenfeld is an assistant managing editor at The Washington Post.

John Henry Faulk in Chicago

He was almost —
but not quite —
rehired by CBS

by BILL GRANGER

There was reason to hope that former star CBS broadcaster John Henry Faulk was completely "rehabilitated" after the CBS TV movie dramatizing his blacklisting by CBS and his subsequent successful legal battle against the practice was shown last October. But if his encounter with a Chicago CBS radio station is any indication, the blacklist may be gone, but the timidity and nervousness linger on.

A week after the broadcast of the movie *Fear on Trial* Faulk came to Chicago to appear on the local ABC station. During his two-day stay Faulk was squired around the city by Studs Terkel, the author and local radio broadcaster, who also had been a victim of blacklisting. Local TV and radio stations, including the nationally syndicated *Kup's Show*, clamored for interviews. Faulk was almost as popular among Chicago

Bill Granger is the radio and TV critic of the Chicago Sun-Times.



John Henry Faulk

broadcasters as Emperor Hirohito, who came to town a few weeks later. "I was so busy, I couldn't piss for four hours," Faulk said in a pleased drawl.

During an interview at WBBM, the CBS owned-and-operated all-news radio station, it occurred to news director Dick Hultman that Faulk might make a good commentator for the station. (At the time WBBM was in the process of changing its commentary format.) Hultman mentioned the idea to Faulk, who seemed interested; to William C. O'Donnell, the station manager, and to Dave Millberg, O'Donnell's assistant.

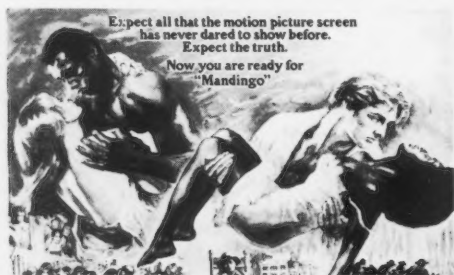
The very next day a highly placed source at the station telephoned me to

say, "There's opposition to Faulk in the sales department. They think he's too controversial."

I reported the apparent job offer and the bickering at the station about it in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. At lunch a couple of days later, Millberg told me, "Your story was essentially right — except for the part about opposition in sales. There's no opposition at the station. We're just evaluating what we want to do with the commentary operation."

A specific offer eventually was made to Faulk: in return for a weekly taped commentary, he would receive a nominal \$25 payment. Ironically, Faulk found himself turning down the first job CBS had offered him since firing him eighteen years earlier. (Faulk has since accepted another offer to appear on a thirteen-week segment of the nationally syndicated *Hee Haw* comedy program, starting in January.)

Was Faulk too controversial for the station? Several people at WBBM telephoned me and, after insisting on anonymity, claimed that there was opposition to Faulk among some conservative members of the sales department. As it turned out, a country entertainment show like *Hee Haw* walked in where at least some broadcasters still fear to tread. ■



Defending Southern womanhood

The ad (above) for *Mandingo* that ran in most newspapers showed racially mixed couples. In the version (right) published in The Spartanburg (South Carolina) Herald-Journal, the white man's shapely burden is white and the black's, black. The co-feature at the Thunderbird Drive-In: The Klansman.



NATIONAL NOTES

Mayors as broadcasters

DALLAS, TEX.

Two Texas mayors — Wes Wise of Dallas and Tommy Vandergriff of nearby Arlington — have found a new way to remain in the public eye: they serve as sportscasters on local radio stations. While few doubt their abilities as sports reporters, questions have been raised about the impact of their supposedly nonpolitical exposure at election time.

Wise, who was a broadcast sports director and newsmen for twelve years before turning to politics, returned to sports in October to help pay a \$30,000 court judgment rendered against him for defaulting on a business loan. He does an early morning sports commentary for radio station KVIL.

Wise makes \$50 a week as mayor here, plus an undisclosed salary as vice-president of the World Trade Center, and says he sought the extra income only to pay off the court judgment. He sees no conflict of interest between his mayoral duties and his sportscasting, and says that he "checked it with the city attorney." Station officials, however, say Wise's sportscasting career may come to an abrupt end if he decides to file for a congressional seat in February. "He'd have to quit or we'd have to offer equal time to his opponents," says Ron Chapman, the station director at KVIL.

In Arlington, Vandergriff, who is independently wealthy, works without pay as a commentator on the Texas Ranger Baseball Network. Vandergriff was the person most responsible for getting the Washington Senators baseball team to move to Arlington. Part of the deal was a pledge to enlarge the existing stadium as part of an entertainment complex — a project financed by \$10-million in city bonds.

Vandergriff says of broadcasting: "It's really a return to my first love. I studied speech and broadcasting at UCLA

and worked for six years on radio stations in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hollywood before I returned to Arlington." The mayor adds that his volunteer work in broadcasting saves the city money — a subject of some importance to Arlington residents, who have watched the bonded indebtedness of the entertainment complex (Texas Stadium, Ranger Baseball Network, and Seven Seas) grow from \$10 million in 1970 to \$49 million today. Vandergriff admits that his job also provides an outlet for promoting the costly complex.

The success of Wise and Vandergriff has led other area mayors to take to the airwaves. Mayor Clif Overcash of Fort Worth has started a "Let Me Speak to the Mayor" call-in broadcast on radio station KJIM, and Mayor Larry Matkin of Irving staged a spoof of Wise's sportscast on radio station KERA-FM.

Now Matkin is considering a regular broadcast of his own. As he puts it, "I can see why those other guys do it — it's a lot of fun. And you'd be surprised the number of people who hear you and comment about it. I was just kidding around, but it might not be a bad deal at all." Matkin didn't add that regular airtime is also one of the easiest ways to keep your name on the lips of the voting public — even if you don't have large debts or an interest in promoting costly sports complexes. *Rena Pederson Gish*

Ethics code with teeth

MILWAUKEE, WIS.

When Ray Kenney, business editor of the *Sentinel*, asked an assistant to find out who the successful bidder was on more than 6,000 shares of the American Bankshares Corporation being auctioned off as part of a liquidation sale, he was amazed to discover that the purchaser was none other than *Journal* investigative reporter Stephen L. Castner. The day Kenney's story appeared,

Castner was fired for violating the *Journal's* strict code of ethics, which prohibits reporters from engaging in "outside activities that would create a conflict of interest or give the impression of one." Before Castner was fired, though, most *Journal* reporters — who applauded the action — expressed dismay at the way *Journal* management handled the case.

The value of American Bankshares stocks had fallen from twenty dollars to twenty-two cents (Castner's purchase price) during a year in which his exclusive series about the company's huge unreported losses ran on the front page. Castner claims that he used no inside information in making the purchase, and that the stock auction in fact was advertised to the public. He adds that he considered the possibility of conflict of interest before making the purchase, and decided that there was none.

When advance word of the *Sentinel* story first began circulating in the two newsrooms (the *Sentinel* and the *Journal* share facilities and non-newsroom employees, but are fiercely competitive editorially), *Journal* editor Richard Leonard was out of town. Managing editor Joseph Shoquist talked to Castner about the transaction and asked him if he could cancel the deal. Castner promised to find out. (It turned out that the seller, a Chicago bank, refused to allow him out of the contract.)

Leonard returned the next morning and saw the *Sentinel's* exposé on its front page. Leonard says that he had time before the *Journal's* first edition to do little more than assign a reporter to cover the story. Written under a tight deadline, the story was disturbing to *Journal* reporters critical of Castner's purchase, since it emphasized Castner's side of the story and ended with Leonard's announcement that Castner was being taken off his beat. Reporters recalled that some years earlier, a *Journal* staffer had been suspended for sev-

NATIONAL NOTES

eral days for displaying a "Proxmire for Senator" bumper sticker on his car and for driving Proxmire to an event he later covered. Castner, on the other hand, was only being moved off his beat for what appeared to be an attempt to seek financial benefit from his coverage.

It wasn't until the end of the day, Leonard says, that he finally had time to discuss the situation at length with Shoquist. They decided then to fire Castner. When reporters came back to work the next day, an announcement of the firing was on the newsroom bulletin board. (The next edition of the *Journal*, twenty-four hours after publication of Leonard's original decision, reported the firing.) "You could almost hear the cheering in the newsroom when the notice was put on the board," financial affairs reporter David Beal says. Jean Otto, an editorial writer for the paper, says she thought the paper was right to fire Castner, "especially because he did not realize there was a conflict."

Castner maintains that his punishment was too harsh. "Management acted unfairly," he says. "The code is overbroad and does not lend itself to reasonable interpretation." Castner points out that there is no specific mention of stock ownership in the code; the conflict-of-interest clause appears in the section about participation in public affairs and politics. Managing editor Shoquist says in the paper's defense, "What was important was our readers' regard for our integrity." And editor Leonard says, "The code is specific enough."

George A. Bailey

Too much privacy

SALEM, ORE.

When the Oregon Legislative Assembly next convenes in January 1977, it will again be considering a bill to help protect the rights to privacy of persons who are arrested or indicted. Legislators thought they had taken care of the situation when they passed a similar bill during their last session. Instead, they created four days of legal chaos that alarmed members of the news media and badly disrupted the state's criminal-justice system.

The effects of the new law were so



Male chauvinist cropping

The Des Moines Register quoted a researcher as saying that children's TV programs such as *Sesame Street* are male-dominated, both in numbers and in the way women are treated. All well and good. But the Register went further. The photo of the *Sesame Street* cast published with the article late last year was cropped as outlined in white above: all the female cast members were left out. The caption read, "It's a man's world on 'Sesame Street.'" One artfully cropped picture can be as misleading as a thousand words.

severe that the assembly convened in special session and repealed the law only days after it had taken effect. But what happened in Oregon during those four days illustrates the difficulties facing legislators who seek to pass laws protecting individual privacy — very possibly at the expense of freedom of information.

The short-lived law prohibited any official public disclosure of criminal records, including records of "arrest, detention, indictments, information or other criminal charges . . . sentencing, correctional supervision, and release."

The bill, whose official designation was House Bill 2579, somehow slipped through the legislature and was signed by Governor Bob Straub almost without public comment. It wasn't until a few days before it was scheduled to take effect in September that Attorney General Lee Johnson advised the governor that the law was unconstitutional, at least in part, because it "would forbid public disclosure of even the most familiar trappings of the public trial."

When the implications of the law became known, members of the press were quick to express alarm. The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

planned to challenge the law in court.

But the problems caused by the new law were even more serious within the state government. Social workers could no longer help prisoners who were completing their jail terms to find jobs — because prison officials were not allowed to disclose whom they were releasing, or when. Auto-insurance companies threatened to stop issuing policies if they could not check driving records. The law was spawning "horror stories by the minute," said Oregon House of Representatives leader Phil Lang. "Every time we sat down to discuss this law, we'd find another group of people affected by it."

The police themselves had the most trouble. Most law-enforcement agencies released no information at all about criminal matters. Portland police even withheld names of those involved in traffic accidents. Jails in Pendleton were jammed with revelers charged with minor offenses during the town's annual rodeo, but few of them could be bailed out because police couldn't tell their friends or relatives they were in jail. "Somebody should be shot for passing that law," said a Pendleton deputy.

Barry Mitzman

New Times. The mouse that roars.



Superman we are not.

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Some recent roars.

Every two weeks, NEW TIMES comes along with some dynamite in its fist.

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In "The Greatest Cover-Up of All" we looked at the new evidence in the JFK assassination and concluded it was a conspiracy. In "Under Control," we got inside Silva Mind Control. Is it just the latest psycho-chic or can it really give you the power to look inside other people's bodies? In "The Divine Recline of Miss M" we sought an answer to that heavy question—

Has Bette Midler shot her bolt?

"Women Who Murder" showed how male sexist attitudes can help women—especially if they shoot or stab somebody. "Not with a Bang but with a Psst" asked what's being done about those killer aerosol cans. Answer? Nothing! "Selling the Black Vote" made a lot of blacks and whites mad with its unblinking look at some new ethnic hustlers. "Victims of a Desperate Age" examined evidence that the Rosenbergs could have been framed. "Prisoners of Psychotherapy" was the last word on escaping from your analyst.

Is NEW TIMES mad all the time?

Golly, no. Don't get the idea we do nothing but dredge up embarrassing facts and tweak important noses. NEW TIMES is the magazine of what's happening and that's a spectrum that includes love and music and lifestyles and movies and all manner of rare new ideas. For instance, we reported on Erhard Seminars Training (est), one of the most fascinating of the new life experiences. We got inside the world of bisexuality. We published our own medical research on pot—"Attention: Smoking Grass May Be Good for Your Health."



And of course we continue to report on the eternal battle of The Little Guys vs. The Big Guys. Like the story on Sam Lovejoy, who toppled the big bad nuclear tower.

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Boosters in the newsroom: the Jacksonville case

by SEAN DEVEREUX

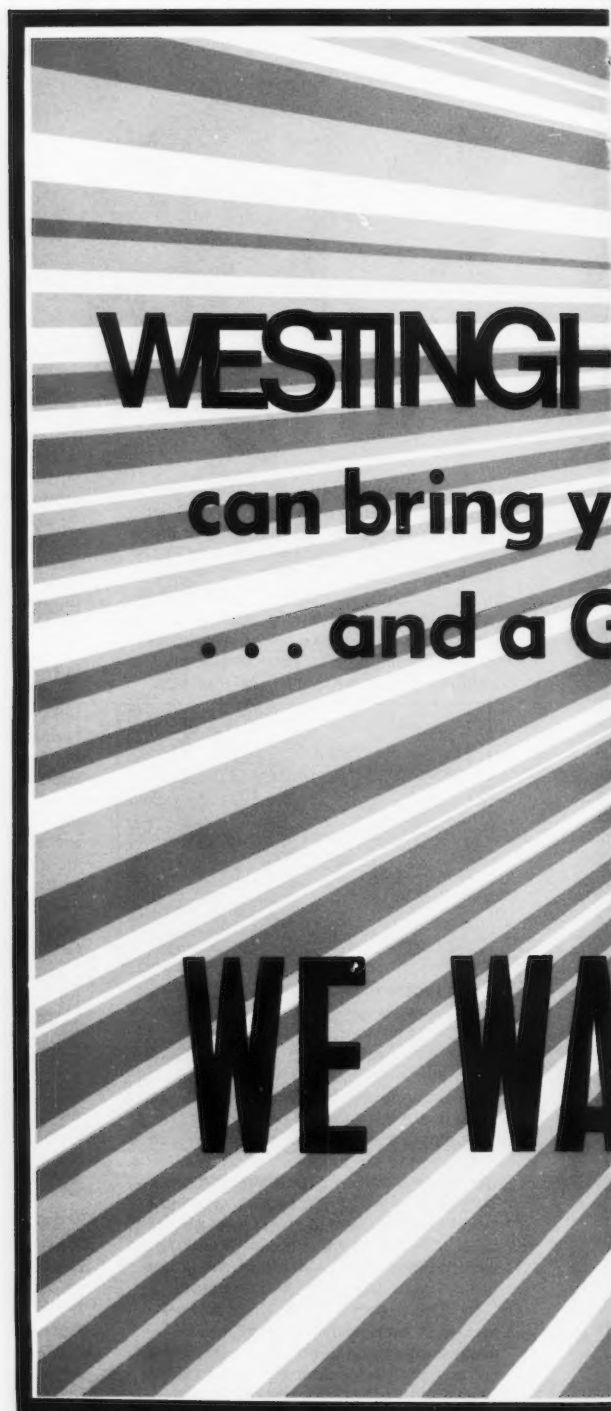
The American business man is generous to a fault, but one thing he does demand of all teachers and lecturers and journalists: if we're going to pay them our good money, they've got to help us by selling efficiency and whooping it up for rational prosperity!

excerpt from George S. Babbitt's address
at the dinner of the Zenith Real Estate Board,
in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*

Jacksonville, Florida (population: 570,000) has long enjoyed the reputation of being a city in which trains don't hit cars, cars hit trains. This bit of local color dates back to 1897, when Florida magnate Henry Flagler, vexed at being accused by Jacksonville's *Florida Times-Union* of falsifying records of railroad land holdings to dodge taxes, silenced the paper by buying up its parent company, the Florida Publishing Company. Abruptly, trains and railroad men could do no wrong — at least not in Jacksonville. Control of Florida Publico, as the firm is informally called, and thus of the *Times-Union*, has remained in the hands of railroad men ever since. The present owner is Seaboard Coast Line Industries, one of Florida's largest companies, which also controls the merged Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Railroads, as well as the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. Workers in Florida Publico's photoen-

Sean Devereux grew up in Jacksonville and, as a boy, delivered the Jacksonville Journal. He was a reporter with The Florida Times-Union from March 1972 until September 1973. He now attends the law school of the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill.

Boosterism can seize any city, placing pressure on journalistic standards. The *Review* sees nothing wrong with the hard sell for civic improvements in editorials, even



Among other expressions of support

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

front-page editorials. But slanting the news is another matter. It is a dangerous practice which, in the long run, benefits no one — as the following story shows.

Jacksonville Journal, Friday, May 5, 1972—15



HOUSE TENNECO
ou a brighter tomorrow . . .
reater Jacksonville.

NT THEM HERE

 Jacksonville Journal • The Florida Times-Union

for a floating nuclear power plant project, backed by Westinghouse-Tenneco, Jacksonville's two dailies signed this two-page ad.

graving shop recall that back in the fifties they had to airbrush the words "Atlantic Coast Line" from the sides of boxcars in train-wreck photographs on the rare occasions such photographs were run. As late as 1973 a *Times-Union* police reporter who covered an accident involving a Seaboard Coast Line train had to telephone SCL's assistant public-relations director and read the story to him for approval before the city editor would accept it.

As the city's only morning paper, the *Times-Union* has a hefty circulation (148,800) and no real competition. Florida Publico bought up its sole local rival, the afternoon *Jacksonville Journal* (circulation: 60,400) back in 1959.

Jacksonville is also the city which, in 1972, was selected by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation and Tenneco, Inc., to be the home of a major new industry — the construction of floating nuclear power plants, designed to be moored in the ocean to generate power for coastal cities in the U.S. and elsewhere. And thereby hangs a tale.

Only a parking lot separates the Seaboard building from the newspapers' office buildings in downtown Jacksonville. It took half a year, however, for the power plant story to move from the conference room of the Seaboard building to the pages of Jacksonville's two dailies.

The Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company was the prime mover in inducing Offshore Power Systems, the joint Westinghouse-Tenneco venture, to locate in Jacksonville. In July 1971, E. H. "Bud" Whittaker, SCL's manager of industrial development, met members of Westinghouse's special projects division in Tampa. They were looking for a deep-water harbor site from which they could launch floating nuclear plants, which would then be towed to permanent sites. Whittaker was confident that in Jacksonville they would find the site they were looking for. Three Westinghouse men arrived in late August.

From the start, secrecy was the policy — a Westinghouse policy that Jacksonville's civic leaders, including Florida Publico board members and newspaper executives, enthusiastically adopted. Thus, on August 26, when Whittaker's assistant Jim White introduced the site scouts to Bob Peace, the managing director of the Jacksonville Port Authority, he followed their instructions and identified them simply as representatives of "a reliable company." Only after Peace consented to keep the information a secret did the Westinghouse men identify their employer and describe their plans for a multimillion-dollar plant.

Shortly after this meeting, Virgil Fox, executive director of the Jacksonville Area Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100, the chamber's industrial development task force, was let in on the secret. Then, Fox recalled in a recent interview, "because of the size of this project and because of the necessity to get the full support of the city," he and Peace decided "to confidentially alert a number of key people about this project." The number was rather large. "The mayor, the president of the city council, the chairman of The Committee of 100, the president of Florida Junior College, several large key industrial employers, and the governor were alerted," Fox said.

Florida Publico's publisher, Robert Feagin, and executive editor John Walters were also let in on the secret. "Both Bob and John are in The Committee of 100," Whittaker points out. "They knew about the project from the beginning." So, too, did the overwhelming majority of Florida Publico's then thirteen-man board of directors, eleven of whom were also members of the chamber's Committee of 100.

So, too, did at least one Florida Publico reporter — *Times-Union* business editor George Wachendorf. "You knew George could keep a secret, if George gave you his word," explains Ross Legrand, an assistant manager of industrial development for SCL. Virgil Fox, another admirer of Wachendorf's ability to keep a news story to himself, added in an interview: "Once in a great while we [staff members of The Committee of 100] level with the media. George and I discussed Westinghouse-Tenneco. I didn't discuss it with regular reporters. I had confidence in George. George knew all along."

Publisher Feagin, asked to comment on the newspapers' six-months' silence on a story that the *Times-Union* was later to call its "Story of the Year," replied that "a premature announcement here might have tipped our hand to Portsmouth [Virginia, which Westinghouse-Tenneco was also considering as a site in the fall of 1971]. We have to be very careful of giving aid and comfort to the enemy — not enemy, really, but aid and comfort to another community." Virgil Fox, meanwhile, defends the news blackout on the ground that "publicity muddies the waters. A community will go crazy if people think a big plant is coming there. Most of the time a company will look at several dozen locations. Westinghouse looked at over fifty — fifteen or so in Florida. The corporations are good citizens. They don't want a whole lot of towns getting excited over nothing."

While Jacksonville's two dailies obligingly withheld the ops story, two Portsmouth, Virginia newspapers — the *Ledger-Star* and *The Virginian-Pilot* — broke it. An Oc-

The trap

Seaboard Coast Line Railroad, the prime mover in bringing Offshore Power Systems to Jacksonville, was kept out of the story that Florida Publico reporters told. George Wachendorf — then the *Times-Union* business editor, now in business for himself — does not hesitate to explain why he did not mention the railroad in his stories. "The railroad owns the paper, you know. Some of my sources were SCL people. I was protecting my sources. I learned to stay off the railroad as much as possible."

Wachendorf described one object lesson. One day he thought he would write an article about railroad freight rates. He discussed the idea with his editors. His discussions left him with the understanding that Seaboard could not profit by such a public examination: if his analysis determined that Seaboard's freight rates were high, readers would conclude that Seaboard was greedy; if they were low, readers would conclude that the story had been published to plug Seaboard. "It's the typical trap you get into on the *Times-Union*," said Wachendorf.

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tober 8, 1971 article in *The Virginian-Pilot*, for example, quoted a local source as saying that Portsmouth was being considered as a possible OPS site and that "Jacksonville, Florida, is making a strong pitch for the [ops] plant and that Savannah, Georgia, is interested."

The Portsmouth papers scooped Jacksonville's by a full five months. (In a speech delivered in 1973, Virgil Fox said of the Virginia coverage: "This was of considerable annoyance to the Westinghouse-Tenneco people." He added: "They were highly complimentary of us and our news media for the discretion that we had used in dealing with them. Our news media deserved this compliment. In spite of the fact that most of them knew about this project, they respected our request to remain silent. They were great!") Florida Publico's news managers did not release the story until March 9, 1972; GIANT INDUSTRY BID IS BARED, the *Times-Union* stated in a banner headline. Two and a half months later, the decision was made. On May 25, D. C. Burnham, chairman of the board of the Westinghouse Electric Corporation, and N. W. Freeman, chairman of the board of Tenneco, Inc., flew to Jacksonville to announce publicly that the \$200-million OPS plant was definitely coming to Jacksonville. When the two board chairmen emerged from the Robert Meyer Hotel, where they had been guests of honor at a banquet sponsored by the Jacksonville Area Chamber of Commerce, they saw copies of the *Jacksonville Journal* headlining their announcement already in the racks. "Thirty to forty seconds after our news conference announcing it!" marveled Tenneco chairman Freeman. "This is the fastest action I have ever seen by a newspaper." Jacksonville's two dailies could move very fast, when they chose to.

During the intervening two and half months, Florida Publico's all-out support for a project that promised to bring jobs and money to Jacksonville led to a burst of boosterism that might have come straight from the pages of *Babbitt*. From the time the publishing firm's two dailies began selling Jacksonville on OPS (and selling Westinghouse-Tenneco on Jacksonville) until Westinghouse-Tenneco made its decision, the newspapers repeatedly suppressed news outright; they repeatedly kept arguments advanced by critics of the project out of the headlines and buried them so deep that only the most dogged reader could unearth them; and they resorted to a counterpunch technique: blasting the opponent's position before stating it.

Before citing specific instances, it might be well to look into one mystery: why did Florida Publico executives break the story when they did? Publisher Feagin's explanation is that until March 9 the project "was purely speculative." In an interview, he said he could not recall, though, what early-March developments made it any less speculative. Virgil Fox of The Committee of 100 and Whittaker and Legrand of the SCL agree that the story was broken on March 9 for only one reason: the Florida House Committee on Finance and Taxation was due to consider a tax-bill amendment, introduced by a Jacksonville legislator, that would exempt installations costing more than \$1 million from paying sales tax on heavy equipment. As Fox ex-



George Wachendorf, former *Times-Union* business editor: "I did for Westinghouse-Tenneco what a good public-relations firm would have done. Maybe I got carried away."

plained in an interview, "It was too tough getting a tax break for an anonymous company. It [the OPS story] would have been kept under wraps even longer, somewhat longer, if it hadn't been for the tax problem."

There is considerable evidence to support this view. In his front-page March 9 story in the *Times-Union*, for example, business editor Wachendorf warned readers that in order to make sure the giant industry came to Jacksonville, the business community would have to provide "a favorable climate." He then dropped a heavy hint, describing Florida's sales tax on heavy equipment as "a possible barrier to the plant's location here." Virginia levied no such tax, he noted. On March 10 the *Journal* published an editorial which asserted that failure to give the OPS project a tax break "could prove to be the deciding factor that would rob us of this magnificent opportunity, the type of industrial enterprise that few cities would dare dream of possessing." News on March 11 that the house committee had voted down the tax-law amendment bill did nothing to still the clamor on this issue in Florida Publico's papers. Between March 9 and March 15, the two newspapers ran, between them, eight news stories and two editorials describing the Florida tax law as a critical factor in the choice between Jacksonville and Portsmouth. (An editorial in the *Palm Beach Post*, after calling attention to "the current semi-hysteria being whipped up in Jacksonville," suggested that if the citizens of that city were so afraid that OPS would go away to Virginia if the project were not given a tax break, they might consider amending their local county property-tax schedule to take up the slack. This alternative was not voiced in the Florida Publico papers.)

The horse race

At a Jacksonville press conference held on March 23, William Staten, a manager in Westinghouse's special projects

division, said: "We hope this [plant] is to be located in Jacksonville. But the choice of sites is still a horse race. It could be Jacksonville or it could be Portsmouth." *Journal* copy editors turned Staten's statement into a headline: "Westinghouse: Plant Between Jacksonville and Portsmouth." And the horse-race theme was written tightly into the drama which Florida Publico's papers would construct for their readers for the next two months.

How genuine was the race?

In a free-lance, how-to-bring-a-whopping-industry-to-your-home-town article, which appeared in a business publication in 1973, George Wachendorf wrote:

Basic Strategy — The original announcement from OPS said that Jacksonville was one of two sites being considered for the plant. . . . The writer personally feels that Jacksonville was the prime choice right from the beginning, but the element of competition no doubt did much in intensifying the Jacksonville community effort for OPS. . . .

Apparently, Westinghouse-Tenneco held up Portsmouth as a threat, not a novel way of wringing concessions from city fathers — and Florida Publico executives, editors, and reporters accepted their version as gospel.

Ross Legrand of the railroad says now that there never was any real suspense: "They [Westinghouse-Tenneco] were only interested in Portsmouth if it fell dead in Jacksonville." Virgil Fox and J. J. Daniel agree. Daniel, chairman of the executive committee of a large Florida real-estate firm and a prominent member of Florida Publico's board of directors and of the chamber of commerce, recalls being told by A. P. Zechella, then the manager of Westinghouse's special projects division and now president of Offshore Power Systems, that Portsmouth was a distant second choice, a back-up only if plans went radically awry in Jacksonville. "Portsmouth did not want them [Westinghouse-Tenneco] there," Daniel recalls, although he does not recall the reason. "The papers here let them know they were wanted."

Fox supplies a reason. Early on, he was told that the concentration of industry in the Portsmouth area — including Tenneco's shipyards there, the country's largest — posed a labor problem for a project that would eventually require a work force of 14,000. One of the first men in Jacksonville to know about the project, Fox adds that he never regarded Portsmouth as a serious threat to Jacksonville's chances for the prize industry.

The impression created by Florida Publico coverage of the OPS story was that the people of Portsmouth were also caught up in the suspense and excitement of this multimillion-dollar horse race. They weren't. During the eleven-week selling campaign in which the *Times-Union* and the *Journal* bombarded their readers with 146 Westinghouse-Tenneco stories, including sixteen editorials on the project, *The Virginian-Pilot* and the *Ledger-Star*, covering both Portsmouth and Newport News, published between them seven stories and one editorial on the project. Single stories published in the *Times-Union* occupied more column-inches than all of the Westinghouse-Tenneco news

and editorial copy printed by both Virginia papers.

Before the OPS project could come into being, a number of hurdles related to the factory site would have to be cleared. The site Westinghouse-Tenneco wanted, because it offered access to the Atlantic Ocean, was on Blount Island, an island in the St. Johns River midway between Jacksonville and the ocean. At the island's center lay a 250-acre saltwater marsh or estuarine bayou known as Back River, in memory of a river which had long since ceased to flow. (While dredging a ship's channel in the 1950s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had used Blount Island as a spoil site; deposited spoil stopped Back River's mouth.)

The first (very low) hurdle, approval by the city council of dredge-and-fill operations on Blount Island, was surmounted on May 4, when, after a five-hour public hearing, the council voted unanimously to approve. Members had made up their minds on the matter before the hearing was held; weeks before the hearing took place, the council had allowed its name to appear on a forty-foot-high billboard which bore the message: "Westinghouse-Tenneco, The Kind of Neighbor We All Want." The idea for such signs, which proliferated throughout Jacksonville, had come from the chamber of commerce's Committee of 100.

Following up on another Committee of 100 idea, on May 5 both Florida Publico papers ran a two-page, three-color ad which read "Westinghouse-Tenneco can bring you a brighter tomorrow . . . and a Greater Jacksonville . . . WE WANT THEM HERE," and which was signed by "The Florida *Times-Union* and the Jacksonville *Journal*."

The second (higher) hurdle, certification by the state's pollution-control board, was overcome on May 22. The third hurdle was cleared the next day when Governor Reubin Askew and the cabinet, in their role as Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, voted to permit dredging and filling on Blount Island. TIIF executive director Joel Kuperberg and his staff had recommended that the trustees should delay their decision. "The trustees cannot adequately protect the public in the light of the information we now have available to us," Kuperberg said a week before the vote. "I feel very, very nervous about having this thing finally being decided next Tuesday." The *Times-Union* paraphrased Kuperberg's strong remarks and then buried them twenty-one column inches deep in a story headlined CITY DELEGATION PRESENTS ITS CASE TO CABINET FOR A-PLANT FABRICATOR. The *Orlando Sentinel*, like other non-Jacksonville newspapers, viewed the TIIF director's remarks as being sufficiently newsworthy to justify a separate story, which it headlined A-PLANT PRESSURE CHARGED.

Diversions and "balancing acts": the dredge-and-fill issue

From the start, Florida Publico's editors and reporters billed the OPS plant as an ecologist's dream. Sustaining this image required great delicacy in the treatment of certain topics — for example, the proposed location of the giant plant (Blount Island's Back River marsh, noted for its wildlife). In Wachendorf's lead-off story on March 9, the proposed location is not mentioned either in the headline or the lead sentence or in the caption under the five-column artist's

rendering of the future plant on the *Times-Union* front page. The island — but not the marsh — is finally mentioned thirteen inches deep in the story after a jump to page 5.

That afternoon's *Journal* said that there were two "Major Islands In The News." The *Journal*, like the next day's *Times-Union*, reported a plan, complete with a map, for building a recreational park on Quarantine Island, across the river from Blount Island. Congressman Charles Bennet told the *Times-Union*: "I envision picnic spots, boat launching ramps, a swimming pool, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and perhaps even an outdoor amphitheater for concerts and plays. Tropical plantings and lights could make the area a real beauty spot for our city."

Quarantine Island? A check in the Florida Publico clipping morgue establishes that it had not been worthy of either newspaper's attention prior to March 9 and would never again make it into print after March 10. The stories quoted officials who said that the park could become a reality only if the state donated the island to the city, if an upcoming bond issue were used to pay for the park, and if Congress provided matching funds. None of these steps was taken, and the island was forgotten. But the maps and the long sidebar stories did associate the OPS project with the prospect of water's-edge fun and games for all.

For weeks, Florida Publico reporters stressed the environmental cleanliness of the OPS project. For weeks, they neglected to mention the need for extensive dredging and filling of the marsh and wildlife areas of Blount Island. Executive editor John Walters, like publisher Feagin a member of the knowledgeable Committee of 100, ignored the gap in the story. George Wachendorf did nothing to plug the gap, either.

The first clear statement that Back River would have to be filled appeared in Florida Publico's papers on April 13 — more than a month after the first OPS coverage — and then only because a UPI wire story from Tallahassee, carried by many other newspapers in the state, prompted the company's editors to divulge this news, in their fashion.

The news out of Tallahassee was that two state environmental officials had said that "the tidal bayou known as Back River, which must be filled in for the [OPS] plant, is 'biologically valuable.'" *Times-Union* reporter Tom Longhurst reported this story in a balanced article headlined **VALUE OF BACK RIVER BAYOU DEBATED IN GOVERNOR'S OFFICE**. He also prepared a sidebar on the request by five Jacksonville conservation groups for a cost/benefit study of the OPS project. His contributions were buried in the women's section, on page 46. At the *Journal*, editors tinkered with the wire service story throughout the day. In the first edition, they headlined the story **BIOLOGICAL VALUE OF BAYOU CLAIMED** and placed it on the front page of the local section; in its final city edition the headline was changed to read **ASKEW 'SUPPORTS' FACTORY LOCATION**. Between editions, a new lead — about Governor Askew's "qualified support" for the location — had been inserted, and the paragraph reporting the environmentalists' position was moved from the second paragraph to the sixth.

Not content with deftly obscuring the news that the cost of the OPS project was to be the Back River bayou, the



Blount Island in 1972 (above), with Back River marsh on the left, and in 1975 (below), with OPS buildings rising on the filled-in marsh



editors of the *Journal* took care to put it "in perspective." Thus, the rewrite of the UPI story ran under another story which bore a larger headline: **TIDAL SILT SAID RAPIDLY FILLING BACK RIVER**. Written by Joe Caldwell, who had covered the port authority since its founding in 1966, the article began:

Back River . . . is silting in so rapidly that it is described by a hydrographic expert as dying and will no longer be a river in less than 10 years.

Caldwell had had to do no digging to come up with his story. Several days before his article appeared, the Jacksonville Port Authority had provided him with a copy of a report made, on behalf of the JPA, by Dr. B. A. Christensen, an expert in coastal and oceanographic engineering. Caldwell does not recall when he was handed the report, which bears the date "March 1972," nor can he say why his superiors chose that particular afternoon to review it. In any event, his article served the usual purpose: the transcendent environmental goodness of the OPS project was preserved — Back River was "dying" anyway; by filling it, the Corps of Engineers would merely be speeding up its inevitable demise. Thereafter, Florida Publico reporters found them-

selves unable to write the words "Back River" without following them with "dying anyway" or "the dying cul-de-sac."

Officials in Tallahassee and biologists throughout the state were upset by the Christensen report — and by the uses to which Jacksonville's newspapers could be relied upon to put it. Kuperberg of the TIF called the dying cul-de-sac thesis "absolute humbug." Kenneth Relyea, a professor of biology at Jacksonville University, said "It all depends on what you mean by 'dead.' When a body of water gradually fills in and becomes a marsh, then a swamp, then a hardwood hammock, then a forest, when was it 'dead'? But Back River will be dead in every sense of the word when they pour concrete and build a plant over it." (Such comments by this local and articulate expert on the subject did not find their way into print in Jacksonville.) Robert Routa — chief of survey and management of tidelands for the state's department of natural resources, and a marine biologist — felt that laymen were being misled and asked Christensen to clarify his statement. In a letter to Routa — a copy of which Routa made available to UPI and which came over the wire to Jacksonville on May 2 — Christensen wrote, in part: "The word 'dead' does not refer to the biological system (or ecosystem) but *strictly* to the river as a physical hydraulic system."

Christensen's report had made a splash on April 13, when it had provided the perfect buffering for the "bad news" from Tallahassee that Back River would have to be filled; his qualifying statement was ignored on May 2 by the *Journal*, then was positioned on page 5 of the second section of the following day's *Times-Union*, nearly three column-feet deep in a story that disputes Back River's biological worth. Christensen's qualification had come too late; both papers continued their litany of "dying anyway."

Any reporter who had bothered to look into the *Times-Union's* "salt marshes" file in a large cabinet in the exact center of that paper's newsroom could have found a very different view of Back River. The reporter might also have drawn some conclusions about why in 1972, the year of the OPS project, the Jacksonville Port Authority had asked a hydraulic engineer to assess Back River, whereas previously it had asked biologists to study the bayou. In 1969, the JPA had commissioned Robert Routa, of the department of natural resources, to study Blount Island. In a report that started out by asserting that "salt marshes are among the most biologically productive areas on earth," Routa had written of Back River: "This bayou is exceptionally productive for marine life and should be preserved intact. A buffer zone should be left between it and industrial development." In 1970, the JPA had turned to Kenneth Relyea, at the local university. Relyea's report, submitted to the JPA on February 20, 1970, ended on an unequivocal note: "I can state that . . . spoiling of the proposed areas [which included Back River] would be an ecological disaster equal to any such disaster that has occurred in North America. . . ." Neither report was judged newsworthy by Florida Publico's editors at the time of its release; neither was used to give background and balance to the Christensen-report story.

On May 2, a 10:20 A.M. dispatch from UPI in Tallahassee

took the *Times-Union* and *Journal* newsrooms by surprise. The story, written by Tallahassee Bureau Chief Barbara Frye, began:

A new biological study turns thumbs down on location of a multimillion-dollar Westinghouse-Tenneco plant on Blount Island in Duval County, State Natural Resources Director Randolph Hodges reported today.

" . . . This proposed project will result in the irreversible commitment of a large area of productive marsh habitat and will have massive adverse effects on the marine biological resources of Northeast Florida," according to the six-page report signed by Robert A. Routa, Chief of Survey and Management for Tidelands.

"An alternate site should be found for this industrial plant and Back River should be conserved so that it can continue to function as an important part of the St. Johns estuary," it concluded. . . .

Routa recalled that previous studies found the St. Johns River to be "probably the most important single feature affecting the shrimp population of the northeast coast of Florida." He said Back River is heavily utilized by these shrimp on their migration in and out of the . . . river.

Reporters at work in the newsrooms near the wire service machines on the morning of May 2 recall that city editors judged the story too hot for them to handle. Routa was, after all, the senior staff biologist of the agency responsible for all of Florida's natural resources. The story quickly ascended the chain of command to the office of executive editor John Walters.

"We don't want this," Walters told a reporter. "Let's hold this until we get something to balance it."

Walters called *Times-Union* reporter Jim Ward to his office. Normally the story would have been assigned to *Journal* reporter Joe Caldwell, since the story broke on *Journal* time; but Walters decided that the *Journal*, two hours away from its first edition deadline, could go to press without the news from Tallahassee. (The *Times-Union*, incidentally, has been known to replate its final editions to make room for such late-breaking stories as the Boy Scouts of America's bestowal of its Silver Buffalo Award on Prime F. Osborn III, vice president of Seaboard Coast Line Industries and president of the Louisville and Nashville line, at a scouts' conference in California.) Walters trusted Ward, who occasionally refers to himself as "the sacred cow reporter." "I know what those people up there want," Ward once told a fellow reporter, with a lift of his eyes toward the fifth-floor offices inhabited by Feagin and other Florida Publico executives, "and I give it to them."

Ward's regular beat was city news — United Fund dinners, trophy-presentation dinners, meetings of the local historical society, the North Florida spelling bee (sponsored by Florida Publico), and Robert Feagin's recent resignation from his post as president of the chamber of commerce because of his publishing company responsibilities. As of March 1972, he had never seen Back River.

As Ward recalls, Walters told him to go to the JPA office where Peace would give him a report which he would find useful. Ward says he left Walters's office with the clear impression that his assignment was to counter the bad news conveyed by Barbara Frye's UPI wire story with whatever helpful news he could extract from the report Peace would

hand him. Walters's reasoning, Ward says, was: Barbara Frye is the wife of Earl Frye, director of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission; members of this commission had worked together with biologists of the Department of Natural Resources in preparing the report which Routa had signed. Her husband "had somehow gotten to her"; she was, therefore, "not objective" — this despite her thirty years as a UPI correspondent.

It was about 2:30 P.M. when Ward rushed out of the Florida Publico building; he had until 10:00 P.M. to produce a "balanced" rewrite.

The report Peace handed Ward was the biological appraisal section of an "industrial land market study" of Blount Island, which the JPA had commissioned in October 1971, shortly after it, SCL, and the chamber of commerce had begun their negotiations with Westinghouse-Tenneco. The firm hired for the job was the Battelle Memorial Institute, of Columbus, Ohio, which specializes in doing research on industrial development. The biological appraisal section was done by Frederick C. Tone, a biologist on the staff of Battelle-Duxbury, in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

"I was lost," Ward recalls. "The report wasn't finished. There were all those bird and fish names and all these scientific formulas that I didn't understand. But I got it [the information he needed] from the summary. The summary pretty well had it all there."

Ward zeroed in on the last lines of Tone's report — which sounded strikingly similar to the recently-published "dying-anyway" Christensen report, which Christensen had just clarified. Tone had written:

Although nearly two-thirds of Back River is quite unproductive in its present heavily silted state, based on existing data, the remaining portion near the mouth is still making important contributions to the Blount Island environment. Yet when compared to apparent productivity in Nichols and Browns Creeks and when it is realized that it is rapidly silting in and will soon die from an environmental standpoint, Back River's contribution to the Blount Island region is considered to be important only on a short term and limited scale. Any additional conclusions will require supplemental data.

This allowed Ward to start off his rewrite (the first thirty-six column inches of which are devoted to Tone's report and a rehash of the Christensen report) as follows:

An in-depth ecological survey of the Back River shows the silted and dying inlet on the Jacksonville Port Authority's Blount Island is productively inferior to other marshlands in Northeast Florida and only of short-term and limited environmental importance.

The "balance" requested by Walters is hard to find in that lead sentence or in the story's headline (BACK RIVER ECOLOGICAL WORTH IS HELD LIMITED) or, indeed, in any aspect of the story.

Both the introduction and summary of Tone's report contained a number of important qualifications. Tone notes, for example, that the JPA had requested "a rapid survey"; that "all collected data are a result of a three-day sampling period in January 1972"; that in January "many species are off-shore and not in their marsh-dependent stage." Ward buried these qualifications 200 lines deep in his story. He buried Christensen's clarification — which called Ward's

whole lead into question — 280 lines deep in his account. He buried Routa findings — *the* news in the UPI story, which he had been asked to "balance" — 293 lines deep.

More important, while Ward emphasizes that Tone's report "is in marked contrast to" Routa's, he nowhere mentions that Tone was the *first* and *only* biologist whose research might be said to justify the filling of Back River — no doubt because he had not read the Relyea and Routa reports in the newsroom file. (Nor, indeed, had Ward read this new Routa report; all the direct quotes from it that appear in his rewrite were taken from Frye's account.) One man's three-day study of a marsh, made at a time when its marine life was least in evidence, is balanced against three studies made by Florida biologists over extended periods of time — and the Massachusetts biologist's report, commissioned as part of an industrial land market study, is found to outweigh them all.

Ward made his deadline. Walters, pleased with the rewrite, sent the reporter a special note of thanks. In the envelope, Ward recalls, was a check for \$125 from publisher Feagin. He, too, was pleased.

There were further expressions of company appreciation for a job well done. In the June 1972 issue of *Intercom*, Florida Publico's in-house newsletter, Bruce Manning, the managing editor of the *Times-Union*, wrote:

Jim Ward's outstanding job of putting together an elaborate story on the Battelle ecological report on Blount Island was recognized as a standout performance in the best professional tradition of speed and completeness.

Two weeks after his high-speed rewrite, Ward was assigned to a story that took him to Blount Island. Turning to another reporter, he asked: "Where is Back River out here, anyway? I helped kill all those poor little shrimp and I've never even seen the place."

Ward's story was outstanding in one respect: it spelled out, for the first time since Florida Publico's coverage of the OPS project began, the number of acres on and around Blount Island that would have to be dredged (550 acres) and filled (800 acres of marshland and fringe). The figures were cited in the UPI story; apparently, no Jacksonville reporter had extracted these figures from the local port authority, which had filed the dredge-and-fill permit. Ward's citing of them marked not only their first appearance in Florida Publico's two dailies, but also, with the exception of one *Journal* reference, the only time during this period that a Florida Publico reporter would get the number of acres involved in the massive dredge-and-fill operation straight: 1,350 acres. Thereafter, when the two papers referred to dredging and filling required for the project, the figure mentioned was almost invariably 250 acres. "Interesting oversight, wasn't it?" remarked George Wachendorf, whose reporting repeatedly set the loss of marshland at 250 acres, when this discrepancy was later called to his attention. "As far as I'm concerned, OPS was so good for Jacksonville that if someone had told me they needed even ten per cent of all the marsh in the country, I wouldn't have cared." His explanation for any inaccuracies involving the marshes was, "I'm not an environmentalist."

continued

The missing other side

The argument for encouraging OPS to settle in Jacksonville was strong. As Florida Publico's papers incessantly reminded their readers, it would mean 8,000 or 10,000 or 14,000 jobs and a \$100 million payroll each year. But reasonable citizens raised reasonable objections to the way the project was being pushed through. The *Times-Union* and *Journal* either refused to cover such people or counter-punched them into oblivion.

Curtis Lovelace was one local critic of the project whose treatment by Florida Publico's editors may stand as an example of that afforded other Jacksonville critics. Lovelace was president of the Citizens' Committee of 100 (no kin of the chamber of commerce's Committee of 100), a group "dedicated to the preservation of our natural resources, Florida's greatest asset." He was not a rabid conservationist. Almost immediately upon learning the nature of the OPS project, five other Jacksonville conservation groups had voted to oppose the project until a cost/benefits ratio study had been made. Lovelace's group refused either to oppose or approve the project, despite strong pressure from conservationists and members of the chamber of commerce alike, until April 23, when it, too, formally opposed the project pending a cost/benefits study. Lovelace repeatedly hand-delivered letters and press releases, which raised questions about the project, to both newspapers.

In a recent interview, publisher Feagin and executive editor Walters were asked about their failure to give Lovelace and other conservationists a chance to be heard. Both men spoke at the same time. Feagin spoke strongly, saying that in the interest of a balanced presentation of the Westinghouse-Tenneco news the *Times-Union* and *Journal* had solicited the views of environmentalists and other researchers who questioned the project, and that Lovelace, as spokesman for the body of North Florida environmentalists, had been given equal time by the newspapers. "We explained his position time after time," Feagin recalled.

Walters's recollection differed. The editor acknowledged that Lovelace's questions and findings had been ignored by the papers, justifying his decision to do so on the ground that "he had been around talking about the environment for a long time. Oh, ten years. By this time he was making wild claims simply for notoriety's sake. He had begun to sound repetitious."

Walters's memory is the more accurate. During the first two and a half months of Westinghouse-Tenneco coverage, Lovelace was mentioned by name only once, thirty-six column inches deep on a *Times-Union* back page.

While men and women who had doubts about the project were treated as nonpersons or put down in print before they could speak for themselves, those who wholeheartedly approved of the OPS project loomed large in Florida Publico news. Thus, for example, in two and a half months of photographic coverage both newspapers between them ran a total of one photograph of an opponent of the project: a picture of Frank Flook, a member of the Florida Wildlife Federation and of the local chapter of Zero Population Growth, appeared on a back page of the *Journal*. During that period, the *Times-Union* ran dozens of photographs of supporters,

from Florida's Governor Askew to Westinghouse's A. P. Zechella. But the paper never showed the face of a critic.

Epilogue

On May 25, 1972, the day OPS announced its decision to come to Jacksonville, Mayor Hans Tanzler declared, "I believe this is Jacksonville's finest hour," thereby providing the headline for the evening paper. "This plant," he went on to say, "will literally transform our lives."

"I don't want to say that the newspapers prostituted themselves," comments Seaboard Coast Line executive Ross Legrand. (His choice of words was not prompted by the interviewer.) "What I would say is that they were serving the public interest."

The interviewer suggested that it might be healthy for a newspaper to maintain some skepticism or at least some show-me objectivity in the face of a development as vast as the OPS project.

"That's not the way our newspapers here work," Legrand replied. "Our papers work to promote growth."

Florida Publico board member J. J. Daniel defends the two papers' coverage of the OPS project on similar grounds. Asked why editors had not been urged to provide more balanced coverage, Daniel replied: "I don't think the newspapers should have been critical or skeptical. . . . Both Westinghouse and Tenneco are so reputable. The paper chose to support it." Asked whether he thought the support the two papers gave the project throughout their pages should have been confined to their editorial pages, Daniel replied: "How many people do you think read the editorial page? What do you think the percentage is of people who read the news pages versus those who read the editorial page? Seventy-three? Do you think it is that high? Our papers let them know they were wanted."

Asked whether Florida Publico's all-out support for the OPS project was related to the fact that Seaboard Coast Line Industries stood to gain increased railroad business from the project, Daniel replied, "If I believed that the railroad was telling the papers what to write, I would quit the board tomorrow." He did acknowledge that the railroad had exerted influence in the past. "When I first became a member of the board [in 1968]," Daniel said, "I went to see [Robert] Millar [Feagin's predecessor as publisher] and asked him about the newspaper and the railroad. He told me that certain taboos and prohibitions had grown up over the years. 'This is pretty much the way we run things,' he told me." Not any more, Daniel recalls informing Millar. Daniel says that if the railroad still receives special attention in the *Times-Union* and *Journal* newsrooms, it is only because "the change in attitude has not settled down to that level."

In a May 1972 interview which appeared in the *St. Petersburg Times*, but which readers of Florida Publico papers were spared, Joel Kuperberg of the TIF remarked: "The Westinghouse-Tenneco plant may be the best thing that ever happened. If it's a good project it should stand up under examination. It would appear that they [Jacksonville's newspapers and civic leaders] didn't want it examined."

Responding to this statement, George Wachendorf, who

wrote more Westinghouse-Tenneco copy than any other Jacksonville journalist, said in a recent interview: "Nothing stands on its own two feet. You are operating in an unreal world if you think so. You have to sell anything. I am hesitant to think that saying something once or in measured terms gets across to anyone. My job was to make them aware. If I could help it, everyone was going to know about it, even the shoeshine boys. . . . In my mind, the son of a bitch was a winner. My major worry was that people wouldn't realize how good this thing was. That is why I pressed the point. I did for Westinghouse-Tenneco what a good public-relations firm would have done. Maybe I got carried away." (Throughout 1972 Wachendorf moonlighted as a one-man public relations firm, preparing annual reports and investment brochures for several Jacksonville firms. At least three of his clients enjoyed favorable attention in his *Times-Union* financial affairs column. In March 1973, he was given the choice of remaining as business news editor with a raise and giving up his work in public relations, or leaving the paper. He left to become president of Wachendorf Associates, a firm specializing in corporate communications and investor relations.)

Former *Times-Union* reporter Tom Hoey, now director of public relations for the Jacksonville Port Authority, adds: "In retrospect, it appears that it was a selling job. If you are for a thing, if you have decided that it is good for the community, then you should sell it, I guess. We were not told to write anything false, but to stick to the helpful facts. Everything we said was true, but we left some of it out. We didn't seek stories, we took handouts [from OPS, the JPA, and the chamber of commerce]. Anything negative, Dick [Stalder, *Times-Union* city editor] turned his head.

"OPS was very helpful. They sold the paper a bill of goods and they sold us. Obviously it was in their interest to play down any of the problems, problems that are now cropping up. It wasn't Westinghouse's job to point out the problems."

Exactly.

Among the problems that have cropped up: Back River has been filled in, but orders for floating nuclear plants have dried up. In the fall of 1973, OPS had orders for four such plants from the Public Service Gas and Electric Company of New Jersey, the utility which had developed the concept of floating nuclear plants, and letters of intent for the purchase of four more: two for Louisiana's Middle South Utility System, two for the Jacksonville Electric Authority. (Swept up in the local effort to boost OPS, the JPA offered to sponsor up to \$180 million in tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds for OPS, a gesture of support that could save the company millions of dollars in interest by providing it with a loan at municipal rather than commercial rates. Officials of both the JEA and the JPA stood to profit from the success of the OPS venture: Truett Ewton, the chairman of the JEA, was also vice-president for Gulf Life Insurance, the company awarded the group insurance for OPS employees, while Thompson S. Baker, chief officer of Florida Rock Industries and a member of the JPA's board of directors as well as of Florida Publico's, was awarded a

\$4-million contract to supply OPS with materials.)

Then came the recession, and inflation — and, in Jacksonville, a new general counsel for the city. Middle South Utility System let its letter of intent lapse in December 1973. The following summer, Jacksonville's new general counsel, Harry Shorstein, reviewed the proposed contract between OPS and the JEA and concluded a scathing analysis of its terms by writing that its execution would be "contrary to the public interest." The purchase price for the two plants came to \$2.2 billion; the JEA, whose total assets are valued at \$515 million, proposed to raise this sum by floating a bond issue. Shorstein, who described the proposed \$2.2-billion bond issue as "the largest amount of tax-exempt debt ever offered for sale to finance any project in the history of the United States," pointed out that making payments for the two floating nuclear plants could quickly bankrupt the JEA, costing the people of Jacksonville their municipally owned utility system and about \$25 million a year in revenues which the JEA normally paid into the city's general fund. In September 1974 the JEA allowed its letter of intent with OPS to expire. A few days later, PSE&G of New Jersey postponed all of its orders for five years — its first plant is now scheduled to be delivered in 1984 — because of lower forecasts for energy demand and higher interest rates on loans.

On February 1, 1975, Tenneco dropped out of its partnership with Westinghouse. By the summer of 1975, OPS was trying to persuade the federal government to buy four floating nuclear plants, which it could then lease to utilities along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. Westinghouse is now lobbying hard for President Ford's Energy Independence Authority bill, which would set up a \$100-billion corporation (\$25 billion of equity, \$75 billion of debt) to assist private sector energy projects. Whether the country at large needs floating nuclear plants remains an open question. A study just completed by the environment-conscious Scientists Institute for Public Information, for example, finds that rising construction costs will make the production of electricity at nuclear power plants, earth-based and seaborne, economically impractical within ten years: nuclear power will cost more than coal-based power.

OPS officials, meanwhile, say that they are committed to the offshore venture and that Westinghouse will back it even if no federal funds are forthcoming. But today there are no 8,000 or 10,000 or 14,000 jobs for Jacksonville workers out on Blount Island. OPS, which was to have begun work on the world's first floating plant last summer, has cut its work force from 700 to "305 office-oriented people." The huge assembly plant will now be built piecemeal, an OPS spokesman says, each section being completed in time for the next process in the manufacture of a floating nuclear power plant.

It would have been asking too much of any newspaper to foresee the difficulties that presently beset OPS. But it would not have been asking too much of Jacksonville's two dailies to have reported the pros and cons in the beginning, before the community's decision was made — to have behaved, in short, like newspapers rather than like publishing arms of the chamber of commerce. ■

'The Guns of Autumn':

Neither journalism nor responsible criticism have been served by the *Review's* editorial (November/December) on "The Guns of Autumn."

Inexplicably, you chose to ignore the totality of what was broadcast and, worse, you rest your case on assumptions that should offend even the least experienced reporter.

You criticize what you perceived to be CBS's failure to "find anything good to say about hunting," as if to do so were a principle of good journalism.

As reporters, we did not say anything good or bad about hunting, but let the hunter speak for himself. You ignore the many good things hunters had to say about hunting which we reported throughout the broadcast.

It is not the journalist's role to say something good or bad about any subject but to report what is true; it is not for the reporter to present a positive or negative view of any subject, only an accurate one. No one has yet successfully challenged either the truth or the accuracy of "The Guns of Autumn."

You express the concern that in its reporting, the broadcast "play[s] into the hands of critics who say that the networks tend to be biased when they deal with subjects dear to the hearts of 'middle Americans.'"

There are such critics, and one possible way to appease them might be for the reporter to consider whether he, his critics, or the public will like what he reports. There is an endless list of special interest groups that would no doubt welcome such self-censorship, the suppression or alteration of facts that might disturb or offend some group or individual. That would be good public relations, but it is not good journalism. You would apparently sacrifice truth on the altar of credibility and in the process, both would be demeaned.

You say that CBS "offered not one scene that a knowledgeable hunter could have watched with any pleasure."

That is a remarkable generalization

based on another dubious assumption. Not one scene? Not one knowledgeable hunter? In any case, it is not the function of a news organization to give pleasure but to give facts. The function of the entertainer is to give pleasure; of the journalist to get as close to the truth as possible and to report it without regard for whom it may or may not please.

It is true, the broadcast contains scenes of dead and dying wildlife, close-up and at a distance, or exactly as the hunter sees and experiences them. It is also true that the act of killing wildlife — or harvesting, or managing, or of consumptive use if you prefer — is what sets hunting apart from nature walks, bird-watching, and photographic safaris. It is the presence of a weapon capable of killing, and the intention of using it, that for the hunter defines the hunt — the subject of the broadcast. By what stretch of logic or the imagination is hunting to be isolated from the death of wildlife? On what journalistic grounds would such scenes be omitted from a report on hunting?

Would we have been better journalists if we had ignored or obscured the avowed purpose of the hunt, and the results? Would we have been better reporters if, as in *The American Sportsman* and in countless other "outdoors" programs seen locally throughout the country each week, we had faded out on the gunshot when in fact the story does not end there? Wildlife bleeds and dies, animals are gutted, carcasses are carried off, hung to cool and displayed with pride in the field and in the home.

Which is manipulative — reporting that seeks to include all aspects of a subject or that which deals with it selectively, at the whim of the reporter or out of fear of critics and special interests?

Your analogy of vegetarians reporting about packing plants misses the point twice. Unlike the vegetarian viewing the packing plant, neither I nor CBS holds a partisan position on hunting. Secondly, the realities of hunting do not make packing plants or slaughterhouses any

more or less appetizing or humane. They are different subjects, one having nothing to do with the other. "The Guns of Autumn" is not about animal husbandry, the killing of livestock for food. It is about hunting in contemporary America, the killing of wildlife for sport and recreation.

Your criticism might be valid if scenes of dead or dying wildlife were irrelevant to hunting or shown out of context, if blood and death were not integral and undeniable parts of the hunt, or if those scenes had been shown to the exclusion of others that are also part of the hunting picture.

No "disclaimer" of the kind you suggest was made because none was called for. The broadcast did not cover the "abuses" of hunting, although they are numerous and widespread. If they had been the subject of the broadcast we would have reported on poaching in its various forms (wildlife shot out of season, the exceeding of bag limits, the spotlighting and shooting of wildlife at night, shooting from roads, etc.); the use of vehicles and aircraft to spot, chase, and shoot wildlife; the incalculable numbers of wildlife wounded and crippled each year and not recovered; the trespassing and vandalism; and the use of illegal bait, among others.

In fact, nothing shown or discussed in "The Guns of Autumn" was illegal, or unethical according to the National Rifle Association's hunting code, or atypical. Each of the hunting methods reported is popular and widespread. The hunters themselves represented a cross section of Americans professionally, economically, and geographically and none were inexperienced.

Perhaps it is time that critics be subjected to the same scrutiny that they apply to others. (While there are standards for good reporting, there seem to be none for responsible criticism.)

You have resorted to value judgments which the broadcast, and its producers, did not make — in emotional language the broadcast did not use. We chose to

the producer replies

share the modern American hunting experience as we found it — and as supported by months of research and investigation which relied almost entirely on the hunter's own sources — and let the viewer judge for himself. You have decided that the hunters shown were incompetent and that the results were "unsporting, cruel and shocking." Those are your judgments, not ours.

On what grounds do you distinguish between what you call a "skillful, humane hunt" and what you call a "grotesque killing"? Do you believe that wildlife is shot or dies any differently on-camera than off-camera? By what criteria do you judge the competence of the hunter? By the number of shots required to bag his game? In the broadcast, it took anywhere from one to seven shots. Where do you draw the line on competence?

By what standards are the hunts covered to be judged "parodies"? Certainly not by the standards of the outdoor press and hunting literature, the sportsmen's organizations, and state game agencies which report, endorse, and even conduct such hunts and which in almost every instance recommended them to us. By what idealized image of "the hunt" do you judge the many common hunting methods practiced in America today which are covered in "The Guns of Autumn"?

Where "throughout the program" was there "talk about the number of hunters" and of "how many dollars are spent on hunting"? That basic information was given but once and could not have accounted for more than thirty seconds of the eighty minutes. (If you include the report of the estimated number of hunters using shooting preserves, that would be two references totaling about thirty-five seconds.) Would you have omitted it entirely? And, for the record, the buffalo shown in the broadcast were not — as you state — killed in a "fenced-in state preserve," nor was it even implied that

they were. The fence you saw surrounded a water hole, as stated specifically in the narration.

On what grounds would you omit the results of hunting in America each year, what you call the "grim recital" at the end of the broadcast? Would you have preferred a more jovial tone? The fact is that such data are not only relevant but elusive. Hunting is not a spectator sport. There is much about it that is not common knowledge. The figures in the broadcast are in fact low, only those that could be reliably estimated on the basis of a state-by-state survey of game departments by CBS News.

Finally, on what grounds do you ignore the scenes broadcast of living birds and animals; of sunrises and landscapes; of hunters alone, in small groups or with families in the wilderness and at campsites; of the social aspects of the hunt; of the many interviews and more that are so prominent a part of "The Guns of Autumn"? And, on what grounds do you ignore entire sections of the broadcast filmed in the mountainous terrain and small ("middle American?") communities of Utah and Colorado?

You have done exactly what you have accused CBS — without substantiation — of having done. Your perceptions of what was broadcast are based not on its content but on your own feelings about the subject covered. Your language and selective perception belie your self-stated disinterest on the subject of hunting. Your criteria for responsible journalism belie your qualifications to judge the coverage of any story. You have confused passion with principle, a "fatal flaw" in any critic.

IRV DRASNIN

Irv Drasnin is the producer of the CBS documentary "The Guns of Autumn."

Irv Drasnin begins his response by asking rhetorical questions and supplying answers which, if true, would make our comments about "The Guns of Au-

tumn" highly suspect. Did we mean that "The Guns of Autumn" ought to avoid offending potential critics? No, we did not mean that, nor did we say it. Were we arguing that documentaries ought to give pleasure? No, we were not. Did we want the program to omit scenes of the killing of animals? No, we did not. (Drasnin does point out an error in our comment, for which we apologize: the Arizona state preserve where buffalo were hunted in the show was not fenced; only its water holes, where Drasnin filmed, were fenced.)

Drasnin says that our editorial "resorted to value judgments which the broadcast, and its producers, did not make — in emotional language the broadcast did not use." Is it still necessary to argue about whether or not filmed images constitute an emotional language? Can it be that Drasnin does not know that they do? CBS apparently felt that the program was a strong one: they scheduled a follow-up show for critics to present another side. Drasnin seems to argue that he filmed without concern for emotional impact. We are convinced that he is too skilled a craftsman to be as unconscious of what he was doing as he sounds.

We argued in our editorial, and we still argue, that the failing of the show was that it seemed to present itself as a reasonably inclusive overview of the possible kinds of experiences that make up hunting in America. It was our contrary view that the show concentrated on hunting that was unthoughtful, often unskilled, and over-commercialized. We did not argue that the documentary was inaccurate in the sense that it presented things that were not true. We do argue that it was misleading in that it pretended to be much more complete than it in fact was.

We applaud the fact that "The Guns of Autumn" was a powerful and, as far as it went, an accurate documentary. We don't applaud the fact that the show was misleading about the view taken of its subject.

The Editors

BOOKS

Reporting is hell

The First Casualty

by Phillip Knightley. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. \$12.95

by HARRISON E. SALISBURY

I grew up in the tough agency school of news reporting in the 1930s. My assumption and that of my colleagues of what was then UP — now UPI — was that all authorities were natural enemies. My task was to get the information and news by whatever tactic was fastest and most expedient. My deadline was every minute and a twenty-second beat on a national story brought a crisp CONGRATS tapped out on the old Morse telegraph sounder.

I have to admit that a career which has taken me over the world through and over and beyond all the different kinds of "curtains" — iron, silk, bamboo, you-name-it — has not very much changed my basic philosophy.

Once when I was in Chicago, UP's *Front Page* era police reporter, Robert Loughran, got a tip that gangsters planned to bump off Mayor Anton Cermak on the steps of City Hall. His source promised him a ten-minute break on the story, enough for Bob to position himself at an open phone in a cigar store across the street to dictate his eyewitness report. He confided his secret to another UP man and myself so that we would be alert on the desk when the fateful call was made. It never occurred to Bob or to me or to my colleague that we had any obligation to tip off the mayor or the police about what was supposed to happen.

The story was the thing. When Cermak was killed by a bullet intended for

FDR, with whom he was riding in an open car in Miami in February 1933, Loughran swore he had been double-crossed. He never did believe Zangora's bullet was intended for President-elect Roosevelt.

Now I grant that my attitude has changed a bit from those gung-ho days of Chicago journalism. I *do* think now that it is questionable whether a reporter is justified in keeping quiet when an assassination attempt is planned. There is a question as to what justifies such a scoop, but the answer, as we shall see, is not as simple as would appear on the surface.

I mention this episode because it dramatizes one of the basic issues raised by Phillip Knightley in his remarkable book, *The First Casualty*. The first casualty of his title is truth — truth in wartime. He argues that truth perishes because wartime governments extinguish it, supposedly in support of the war effort, but in reality more often in order to conceal their mistakes and blunders from their political opponents and the people. And, secondly, as he documents only too persuasively, journalists themselves collaborate in the extinction of truth because of patriotic or partisan feelings or competitive drive. Sometimes it is simply the sheer rush to get the news into print which leads correspondents into shortcuts such as failing to check out the flimsy rumors or wobbly reports they are given by government sources.

The Cermak story raises a third and possibly more fundamental issue: the question of the moral and social responsibility of the journalist. It is this question which is sharply highlighted by Knightley's encyclopedic presentation.

The moral responsibilities, it is clear, are always present. It only requires war to throw them into high relief, for these are questions which concern not only correspondents but their editors and the

governments under whose menacing-sheltering arm they must work. They are of critical concern to the people themselves, be they citizens of a great democracy like ours or a declared dictatorship like the USSR or the People's Republic of China.

The issue of the press and government as adversaries has been powerfully thrust into public consciousness by Watergate. The same arguments have been advanced as in wartime from the government side: the need for security, the danger of crippling the White House, imperilment to delicate diplomatic negotiations, the president's innate privilege of privacy.

Mr. Knightley's book examines these questions as raised from the era of the Crimean War to the present. He traces

Ernest Hemingway and photographer Robert Capa



Harrison E. Salisbury is a former associate editor of The New York Times and the founder of its op-ed page.

the rise of the war correspondent and looks at his role through the American Civil War, the small wars of Africa and Europe, World War I, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

He has no difficulty in demonstrating that correspondents are often a prime source of distortions, sometimes because of competitiveness or a desire for personal ballyhoo, but more often from a sense of patriotism, chauvinism, partisanship, or misguided confusion of roles. Winston Churchill in the Boer War was neither the first nor last reporter who could not decide whether he was recording contemporary history or making it himself.

And, odd as it may seem, there even were correspondents in both the Korean

and Vietnam Wars who favored the imposition of censorship on their dispatches. Apparently they thought censorship would remove the problem of confronting the moral issues of war reporting. Let the government decide what was right — or not right.

The concept that the government (Big Brother) knows best and its corollary, be a team player, came to the fore when I went to Hanoi in late 1966 and early 1967. To me, the trip to Hanoi was a unique and arduous opportunity to penetrate behind the lines and present a glimpse to Americans of what conditions prevailed within the camp of the enemy. It would, of course, have been impossible to make such a trip if Vietnam had been a "normal" war, declared by Congress, accompanied by the usual barriers against contact with the enemy.

Almost instantly my first dispatches produced from the White House and the Pentagon denunciations which, essentially, sought to label me as a "traitor," an enemy of the American cause. It was not even what I wrote; it was merely the fact that I was in Hanoi. Considering President Johnson's political difficulties, it was perhaps not so surprising that the government found it impossible to distinguish between legitimate reporting from a difficult milieu and "support" of Mr. Johnson's war program.

But if the Pentagon's talk about the "Hanoi Times" was more or less predictable, what I did not expect, and what still seems dismaying to me, was the acceptance of the Pentagon line by respected elements in the American press. I could not have guessed that some of my best known colleagues would glibly parrot the Goebbels tactics of the government press agents. They seemed to find the line between simple reporting and advocacy as difficult to distinguish as did the government.

What Knightley shows is that this

(left) on their way to Paris after D Day, 1944



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blurring is not new. It has existed from the beginning of modern war reporting and it continues to this day as a major source of pollution of the news.

Inevitably the sufferer is the public. The enemy knows what the government seeks to conceal from its people — the huge scale of the casualties in the Somme during World War I, the losses to the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor, the Union disaster at Bull Run, the fact that American bombers were over Hanoi.

The government knew — or could have known — what was contained in the Pentagon Papers. The public did not. Yet, the Nixon administration not only brought the full power of its legal apparatus to bear in an attempt to halt publication but escalated a propaganda campaign designed to label the press as unpatriotic and treasonous.

Nixon lost both in the courts and before public opinion, but it is noteworthy that alongside the newspapers which sought to carry on after the temporary silencing of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, among others, there were papers which took the government's side and denounced their fellow editors for publishing the Pentagon Papers.

The same thing happened in the Watergate case. Behind the fanfare given to *The Washington Post's* exposé there were (particularly in the early phases) not a few newspapers which publicly condemned the Watergate stories. And some editors who did not do so publicly did so privately.

When, more recently, Seymour Hersh of *The New York Times* broke the still-reverberating story of CIA excesses, there were newspapers (including some which made big reputations on Watergate) which sourly suggested that the CIA case had been exaggerated. Now, of course, it is apparent to all that the scan-

dals in the secret intelligence field are equal to, if not greater than those of Watergate.

Thus far the press has not been subjected to a Watergate or the kind of confrontation big business has had, for instance, with Ralph Nader. Perhaps the press never will.

But I would suggest that the questions raised by Knightley's book and by the American experience of recent years warrant a searching examination of the principles upon which the media take their stand and the manner in which they carry out their tasks.

It is clear from Knightley that the American press is the freest and most vigorous in the world — a fact which stems from its charter in the Bill of Rights. But the American press is by no means so free of governmental control and influence as it likes to think.

And it is not enough for us simply to congratulate ourselves on being the best, because the fact is that we are the best of a rather mediocre lot. The press of the dictatorial part of the world, Communist and non-Communist, exists almost entirely to glorify and toady to the government in power. Only a handful of countries even pretends to have a press dedicated to reporting the truth. And even in this country, for that matter, how many members of the U.S. media made a meaningful contribution to the Watergate story? The big TV chains, the newsmagazines, and twelve or fifteen major newspapers. How many papers of the great corporate chains which own more and more U.S. papers were in there fighting for the news? How many individually owned TV stations? How many radio chains? We haven't as much to brag about as we sometimes think.

True, we come out of a tradition of scramble and hustle. That was the *Chicago Front Page* tradition I grew up



Wide World

United Press's World War II correspondent
Ernie Pyle at work in Normandy

on. That was what produced the scheme for the (failed) Cermak scoop and why the question of morality — of deliberately setting out to get a scoop on a planned assassination — never raised a question in my cub reporter's mind.

Now I know there are limits: a reporter can not collude in the commission of a crime — or can he?

Even here I see trouble. Is a forbidden demonstration in Red Square a crime? Is the hiding place of a political refugee charged with murder by a repressive regime a secret to be shared with the police? Had I been entrusted in Moscow with foreknowledge of a plot to assassinate Stalin, was I obligated to go to the GPU?

The dilemmas are sharper than we think. The choices are not easy. And what of AP correspondent Peter Arnett's experience in Saigon during the Vietnam war? Here is Knightley's account:

Arnett has described his standing one hot noon outside the Saigon market and seeing a Buddhist monk squat on the pavement, squirt gasoline over himself from a rubber

bottle, flick a cigarette lighter, and turn himself in a matter of minutes into a blackened corpse. "I could have prevented that immolation by rushing at him and kicking the gasoline away. As a human being I wanted to, as a reporter I couldn't." So Arnett photographed the monk ablaze, beat off the Vietnamese secret police trying to grab his camera, raced back to the Associated Press office, and sent his photograph and story around the world.

Should he have kicked the gasoline away — as he could have?

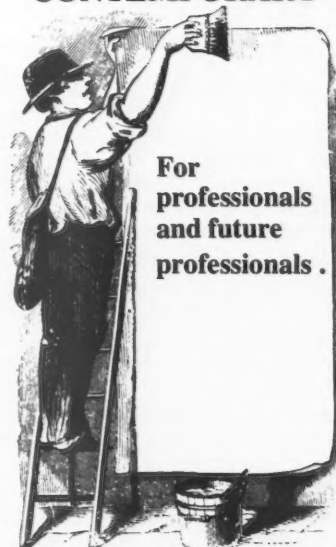
During the civil rights days in the South, not a few young men and young women owed their security — possibly their lives — to Claude Sitton, then the Southern correspondent of *The New York Times*, who made timely telephone calls to remote rural jailers. Sometimes he called not to get news, but to cloak the young people with the protective mantle of his status. He was behaving as a human being — not a reporter.

Was he right or wrong? Can we turn ourselves into computers? Should we try to divorce ourselves from the human race? Should we turn our backs on injustice? Why protect an objectivity which we do not and cannot possess?

Would we all not be more honest — would not the reader be better served — if we carefully stated our prejudices and then did our best to tell the facts as we had discovered them to be?

Knightley presents us with hard-knuckles questions — the very kind that have been much on our minds as the press has risen in recent years to its front-and-center role. I do not know the answers, but I suspect that unless we direct ourselves toward working them out, others who possess neither the inquiring minds nor dedication to the ideals of the First Amendment will attempt to impose their version upon us, just as did those repressive elements that provoked the national outrage which led to the Bill of Rights in the first instance. ■

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LETTERS

Of motorcycles and Dales

TO THE REVIEW:

You've got a helluva magazine with an accuracy level that's astonishingly high, but Robert Meyers blew one in "The Dale Tale" [CJR, November/December].

Meyers writes: "Finally, common sense might have cautioned that the best motorcycle engines get only fifty miles per gallon or so, without an enclosed body. Short of a really major 'revolution' how could the Dale possibly get seventy miles per gallon with a full automobile body?"

As an old, ravaged ex-motorcycle pilot, I must point out that many a motorcycle far exceeds fifty miles-per-gallon. In fact, only the largest bikes, which produce far more than the forty horsepower claimed by the Dale, fall below the forty-to-fifty miles-per-gallon level. I don't know exactly what a BMW two-stroke could push, but I'll bet the seventy miles-per-gallon isn't out of the question.

But this is picking of nits. I consider myself a card-carrying skeptic and I, too, at least didn't disbelieve early news reports of the Dale's prowess. I know there's one of us born every minute, but do so many have to find their way into the news business?

RANDY BROWN
Managing Editor, *The Sun*
Wichita, Kan.

Two sides to fairness

TO THE REVIEW:

Charles Steinberg's statement on page 41 of the September/October issue is just too much. It is *not* an "undeniable fact that the courts have reversed a large number of the FCC's fairness decisions which would have obligated the networks to offer time for reply."

The FCC in the many years the fairness doctrine has been in effect has made only *one* ruling respecting a network broadcast and that is the *only* ruling upset in *any* court — and at a lower level, subject to appeal, at that. The Supreme Court, the *only* time it dealt with the fairness doctrine, upheld the FCC's ruling.

CJR welcomes letters from its readers. We reserve the right to shorten letters.

The debate over the fairness doctrine is understandable. But at least the facts on which the debate is predicated should be accurate.

To my mind, the argument that journalism is inhibited because the FCC requires that it present more than one side of a disputed public issue is foolishness. And I have no respect for journalism that *wants* to present only one side.

WAYNE PHILLIPS
New York

A crucial point

TO THE REVIEW:

Although the Roper article "Distorting the Voice of the People" [CJR November/December] is a good one (showing primaries as they are), it contains an egregious error. The article notes that "New Hampshire has less than 4 percent of the nation's population." That must be the understatement of the year. New Hampshire has less than .4 percent of the nation's population (.8 million out of 209 million in 1972). Mr. Roper has much more to say if we put his decimal point in the right place.

MICHAEL ROBINSON
The Catholic University of America

Burns Roper replies: *Apologies. My decimal point slipped!*

Good news

TO THE REVIEW:

It was with great interest that I read your article, "Would You Welcome, Please, Henry and Liv and Jackie and Erica!" in the September/October issue of CJR.

I was particularly interested in this passage, from page 42: "The normal rules of journalism are often suspended. Indeed, that's what the word 'gossip' means: the story doesn't have to be true (the law of libel, from *Sullivan v. New York Times* on, implies as much; the press can say just about anything it wants about 'public persons' as long as what it says isn't recklessly untrue or malicious)."

Just three paragraphs later, you write: "Walter Winchell, Leonard Lyons, and Ed Sullivan may be dead, and the old-style Broadway column buried with them, but the journalistic gossip form still lives."

You are correct: the story doesn't have to be true, as you have proven, for my father, Leonard Lyons, is very much alive. In May 1974, he retired from the *New York Post* after having written "The Lyons Den" for forty years.

DOUGLAS B. LYONS
New York

Edwin Diamond replies: *In my article on "starstruck" journalism, I was the one who was temporarily blinded. Leonard Lyons no longer writes his column, but he is very much alive, contrary to my reference to him. I apologize to Mr. Lyons and to his family and friends.*

Counting the bodies

TO THE REVIEW:

I will vote "yes" to the question in your November/December issue, "Is It Time To Bury The Holiday Death Watch?" During the four years I worked as a newsman for the Associated Press it was evident to the news staff that the weekend box score of fatalities (auto, fire, drowning, etc.) was based on false reasoning. Those of us who took the time to count could find non-holiday weekends which were much worse in terms of all sorts of fatalities. However, the AP members demanded the feature regularly. You would risk being branded "un-American" if you didn't keep the tally up to date and in the forefront of the report. The "rip and read" broadcasters with their skeleton staff on holidays could fill the hourly news slot easily by running the "death watch."

WILLIAM C. MOORE
Assistant Secretary
Public Relations Director
Ohio State Bar Association
Columbus, Ohio

Conflict of interest?

TO THE REVIEW:

This is a footnote to Peter Sleeper's "National Notes" item (CJR, November/December) critical of the editorial content of *The Washington Post's* new zoned supplement, "The Weekly."

Mr. Sleeper is a fulltime staff writer for the Montgomery County, Md., *Sentinel*, a

suburban Washington weekly newspaper. Mr. Sleeper's employers have failed, in word and cartoon, against the *Post*'s stepped up efforts in the *Sentinel*'s circulation area.

While I should not go so far as to question Mr. Sleeper's motives, I do think his employment at the *Sentinel* — and that paper's editorial position on the *Post*'s zoning — should have been disclosed to the *Review*'s readers.

One wonders whether any of the "suburban weekly editors" quoted by Mr. Sleeper were his own.

WILLIAM NYE CURRY
Editor, "The Weekly"
The Washington Post

The Editors reply: *The Review checked Sleeper's employment before publishing his piece. When we learned that none of the suburban editors he quoted were employed by his paper, we decided there was no need to depart from the usual style of "National Notes" by listing his employer. We stand behind Sleeper's item, but in retrospect we believe that it would have been better to have listed his employer.*

Brooks rebuts

TO THE REVIEW:

The "National Note" maligning me (November/December) was so irresponsible and inaccurate as to be a disgrace to the high principles to which the *Columbia Journalism Review* is dedicated. The article states facts which are mostly wrong, leaps to conclusions which are entirely wrong, and dispenses innuendo along the way. The writer, Peter Nichols, apparently was too lazy to check the facts even though the facts were available on the front page of *The Westport News*.

The Nichols article refers to a series of stories and editorials in *The Westport News* in April, May, and June which detailed a number of instances in which the Westport Planning and Zoning Commission trampled on the rights of local citizens by being arbitrary, inconsistent, unfair, or exceeding its legal authority. The "pace of development" was not an issue.

He attacks me for failing to print the commission's side, for ultimately printing a response from the commission only under pressure from the National News Council and some influential citizens, and that the reason for this dastardly behavior is that I am supposed to own much of the Westport property available for development. The implication is that I plan to develop my vast land holdings with something awful, if only I

could get rid of the P & Z.

The *Review* article states that Brooks "used the *News* to air, almost exclusively, his side of a quarrel with a local governing body." It also states that "on June 27, Brooks made a notable exception to his general policy of jamming the voice of the opposition."

The facts are that *The Westport News* series of seven stories and four editorials ran over a period of three months between April 4 and June 27. Statements from the P & Z were printed verbatim on May 7 (front page), May 14 (page 20), and June 27 (op-ed page). In fact, every single statement of response or rebuttal made by the P & Z was printed immediately and in full.

The *Review* states that "the articles failed to mention a significant fact: publisher Brooks owns much of the property available for said construction, an estimated \$2 million worth."

That allegation was first made by the chairman of the P & Z in her statement published by *The Westport News* on May 7. I denied it in a statement on the front page of the same edition. The truth is, I own commercial properties fully developed with stores and office buildings, but I do not own any land for development.

The *Review* states that "while the [National News] Council was reviewing the case, Brooks opened his pages to opposition views to some extent, so that finally the council determined that no action was called for on its part."

The truth is that the National News Council first contacted me by letter on July 16, weeks after *The Westport News* series had been completed.

What led Mr. Nichols to his unwarranted and irresponsible attack on me I do not know, but I will appreciate your printing this letter as a retraction.

B. V. BROOKS
Publisher
The Westport News

The Editors reply: *Brooks did indeed publish commission statements prior to the National News Council's involvement, and his property was indeed incorrectly described by the Review as "available for construction." The Review deeply regrets the errors. It is true that the News wrote about a building owned by Brooks, without disclosing his ownership, in a series of articles; Brooks says that he acknowledged his ownership of the building in a later article, and that it was a tenant, not Brooks himself, who was engaged in a dispute with the Planning and Zoning Commission.*

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (Section 1321, *Postal Service Manual*): The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income-tax purposes have not changed during the preceding twelve months.

EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION

Average number copies each issue during preceding 12 months:

Total number of copies printed 36,453

Paid circulation:

1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	1,365
2. Mail subscriptions	30,457
3. Total paid circulation	31,822

Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means; samples, complimentary, and other free copies

365

Total distribution 32,187

Copies not distributed:

1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing	2,548
2. Returns from news agents	1,718

Total 36,453

Actual number copies of single issue published nearest to filing date:

Total number of copies printed 39,901

Paid circulation:

1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	1,400
2. Mail subscriptions	35,420
3. Total paid circulation	36,820

Free distribution by mail, carrier, or other means; samples, complimentary, and other free copies

378

Total distribution 37,198

Copies not distributed:

1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing	1,201
2. Returns from news agents	1,502

Total 39,901

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Kenneth M. Pierce
Editor

REPORTS

"Readyprint, Patent-Insides and Boilerplate," by Eugene Harter, **Lithopinion** 39

A dimension of poignancy attaches to the articles in this final issue of the singular journal of graphic arts and public affairs published by Local One, Amalgamated Lithographers of America. In an excellent essay, Harter traces the rise and decline of one of the best-kept secrets of American newspaper history: the so-called readyprint. This was a newsheet printed on one side by a central publisher-distributor who left the other side blank for printing by the franchised local editor. The arrangement flourished from the post-Civil War period through the early twentieth century, and its consequences are beyond estimate — a combination of what amounted to a national newspaper with scores of local papers that were uncensorable and free. Marvelously illustrated with examples of the patent medicine ads that characterized the readyprint's "patent-insides," Harter's article is no minor exercise in nostalgia; it offers, rather, a valuable example of the socio-technological approach in understanding the development of the press and the American character.

"Hollywood and the Newsroom," by Deac Rossell, **American Film**, October 1975

The movies and journalism, says Rossell, are the country's two great populist institutions, and their common denominator is gloriously American pragmatism. This concentration on the *doing* — the event, the action, the accomplishment — culminated, naturally enough, in the newspaper film. Rossell, the film coordinator at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, cites dozens of examples of the genre produced from 1903 on, observing the changes in attitudes and values of reporters implicit in the films (and their audiences). Rossell argues that the relationship between newspapers and films is a symbiotic one: in the past, the moviemens' fascination with the ideals represented by the press was matched by the press's fascination with the glamour of Hollywood; today, he says, newspaper movies, like newspapers themselves, seem to be in a state of decline.

Two other pieces in the same issue are of peripheral interest. In "News That's Fit to Film," movie romantic Sam Fuller says that

fictional exposés should be replaced with the real thing: "The true story of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI would make a hell of a movie today." Harry Clein's "Progress Report: All the President's Men," offers yet more background on the conception and production of that film, and looks at its extraordinary reach for verisimilitude. Quoth Redford: "This is the most over-researched project anyone could do."

"World Broadcasting: A Statistical Analysis," by Sydney W. Head and Thomas F. Gordon, **Communications Research Reports**, April 1975; "Television and Human Behavior: The Key Studies," by George Comstock and others, **The Rand Corporation**, June 1975; "Television and Human Behavior: A Guide to the Pertinent Scientific Literature," by George Comstock and Marilyn Fisher, **The Rand Corporation**, June 1975

Three very useful compendiums. Head and Gordon present a computer analysis of radio and television program content based on the material in the UNESCO yearbook (which they regard as the most comprehensive information on a worldwide basis yet available). Data gathered here include programming in relation to content, importation, advertising, literacy levels, and ownership influence. The "Key Studies" report, which includes over 400 summaries covering almost 450 empirical studies, theoretical reviews, and interpretations, achieves its objective: "to provide direct access in some detail to the scientific literature itself, while at the same time saving the seeker-for-knowledge from an independent and inconvenient search of that literature." The "Guide" is less detailed but nonetheless a superb introduction to the field, consisting of about 2,300 entries, each accompanied by a brief description. Among the topics covered: audience behavior; children and youth; four publics — women, minorities, the poor, and the elderly; decisionmaking about politics and purchases; and alternative methodologies.

"Behind Those Saturday Football Telecasts," by Larry Van Dyne, **The Chronicle of Higher Education**, October 20, 1975

This is a revealing discussion of the economic realities involved in televising college football. As the price of live-broadcast

rights increases (this season, for instance, ABC paid \$16 million for the NCAA football package) along with the stakes in ratings and ad sales, so too does the network's say about such matters as which teams will play on TV, and when. For its part, the NCAA is experiencing pressures from its members on such issues as limits on the number of yearly TV appearances by a team, white domination of the televised games, and the heavy concentration of television money in a fraction of the member institutions. One response to this internal struggle has been a radical proposal which would spread the bulk of the television revenues among all NCAA schools that field football teams. But, Van Dyne says, because of fear that the big-time football schools would bolt and negotiate independently with the networks, the "Robin Hood" plan, which will be presented at the association's January meeting, stands little chance of passage. The article is enhanced by a clear, comprehensive chart listing the teams that have played on TV — and how often — over the last four years.

"The Advocate is the Best Gay News Medium in the Country," by John Reid, **Rolling Stone**, October 9, 1975

In a certain way, says Reid, *The Advocate* is not unlike *The New Yorker*: both magazines are read not least for their ads. But reading *Advocate* ads has an element of voyeurism; many are trashy, or funny, and some are "reflections of the rawest, loneliest, or raunchiest aspects of gay life" (as the illustrative examples testify). Paradoxically enough, *The Advocate* is also a kind of ACLU-type newsletter that is growing, improving, and becoming more professional in providing responsible coverage of the national gay scene. Arguing in this first-rate, sympathetic profile that the only national gay publication is worthy of praise and respect, Reid is well aware of the serious problems posed by the tastelessness of some of its ads. But where else, he wonders, could one place such ads? *The New Yorker*?

DANIEL J. LEAB

Daniel J. Leab is director of American studies and associate professor of history at Seton Hall University

The Lower case

Hirohito Watches Jets Bomb Hapless Patriots

Morning News (Erie, Pa.) 10/6/75

Starting last July, as the unions' contract deadline of Sept. 30 approached with only desultory bargaining, further "work experience" training was given to The Post's nonunion staff, says a spokesman for newspaper plants," he said.

"They are working very well," Mr. Meagher said of the standby workers.

The New York Times 10/12/75

Planners Ask Mass Transit Breakdown

Park Forest (Illinois) Star 9/21/75

Accused rapist finds God in jail

The (San Antonio) News 11/20/75

The North Carolina School of Journalism spelling-grammar-punctuation exam was first given in fall 1973 but was not made a course requirement until fall 1974. During that period, it was refined and different versions were prepared. Originally developed because journalism professors realized the need for an exam, and because newspaper editors complained of student's deficiencies.

Editor & Publisher 8/30/75

Does The Pill Effect Offspring?

Spokane Daily Chronicle 11/12/75

Juvenile court to try shooting defendant

Deseret News (Salt Lake City, Utah) 10/24/75

Defeated state senate candidate Francis Romero is not going to ask for a ballot recount, he says, but he will probe the possibility of vote buying in St. Martin Parish if his lawyer advises it.

The Daily Iberian (New Iberia, La.) 11/3/75

PLO invited to raid debates

Dallas Morning News 12/5/75

Missouri Deer Kill Near 50,000

The Kansas City (Mo.) Star 11/19/75

Genetic Engineering Splits Scientists

The Washington Post 11/29/75

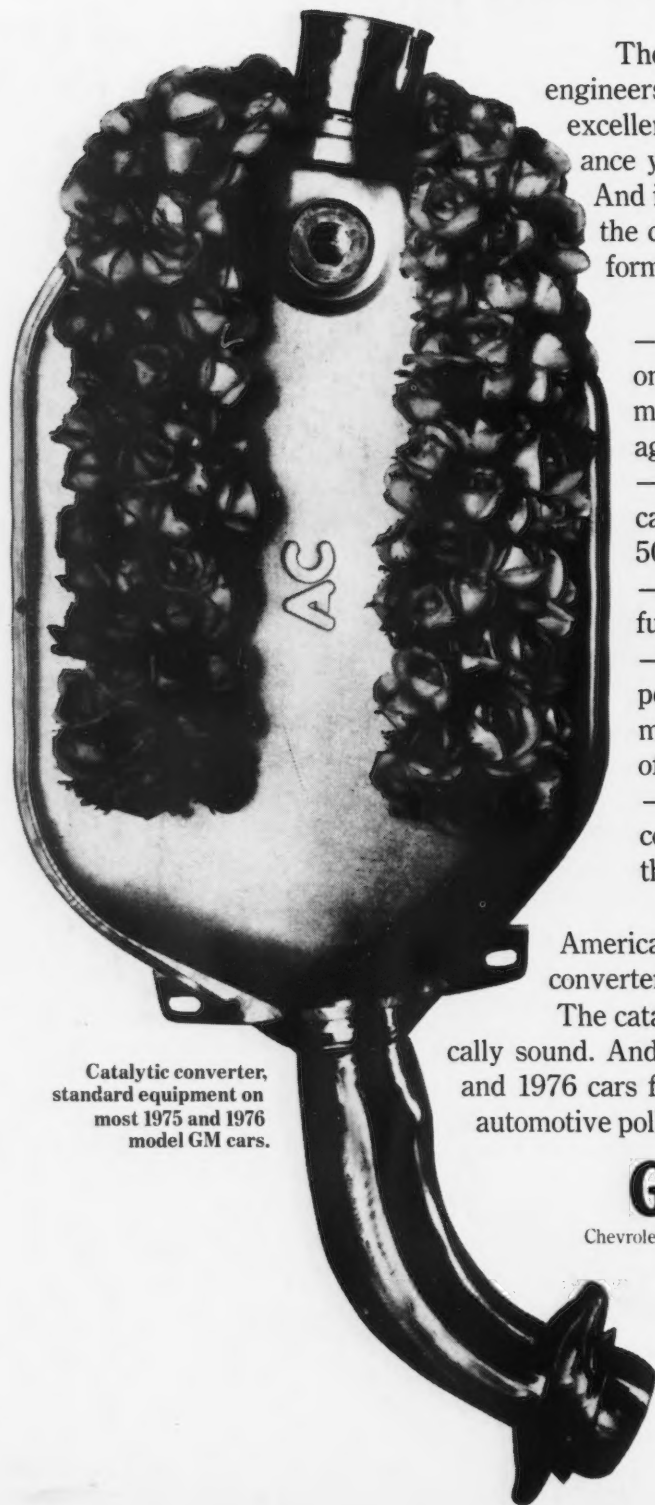
Moroccans Hoist Flag, Stop After 5½ Miles

The Richmond (Va.) News Leader 11/6/75

"... if I had to sum up newspapers' strength in one word, that word would be 'revelance.' "

Serving Advertising in the Midwest 10/31/75

It makes every GM car a real performer.



Catalytic converter,
standard equipment on
most 1975 and 1976
model GM cars.

The catalytic converter has enabled GM engineers to retune engines to the standard of excellence in acceleration and overall performance you've always expected from GM cars. And in more than a billion miles on the road, the converter has proved to be quite a performer itself. Even better than we expected.

These are its accomplishments:

- enabled engineers to improve fuel economy in city driving by 28% over 1974 model GM cars on a sales-weighted average, according to EPA calculations,
- reduces exhaust emissions of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide by about 50% from already lowered 1974 levels,
- lasts the lifetime of the car with unleaded fuel and proper engine maintenance,
- in normal operation its outside skin temperature is about the same as an ordinary muffler and far lower than the temperature of an exhaust manifold,
- has low sulfate emissions, caused by incompletely refined fuel, no higher than those of a diesel engine of similar size.

Auto-makers in Europe, Asia and North America have contracted to buy the GM catalytic converter for their cars. It is a world standard.

The catalytic converter: fuel-saving and ecologically sound. And it's standard equipment on most 1975 and 1976 cars from General Motors, a world leader in automotive pollution control technology.

General Motors

Chevrolet, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac, GMC Truck

